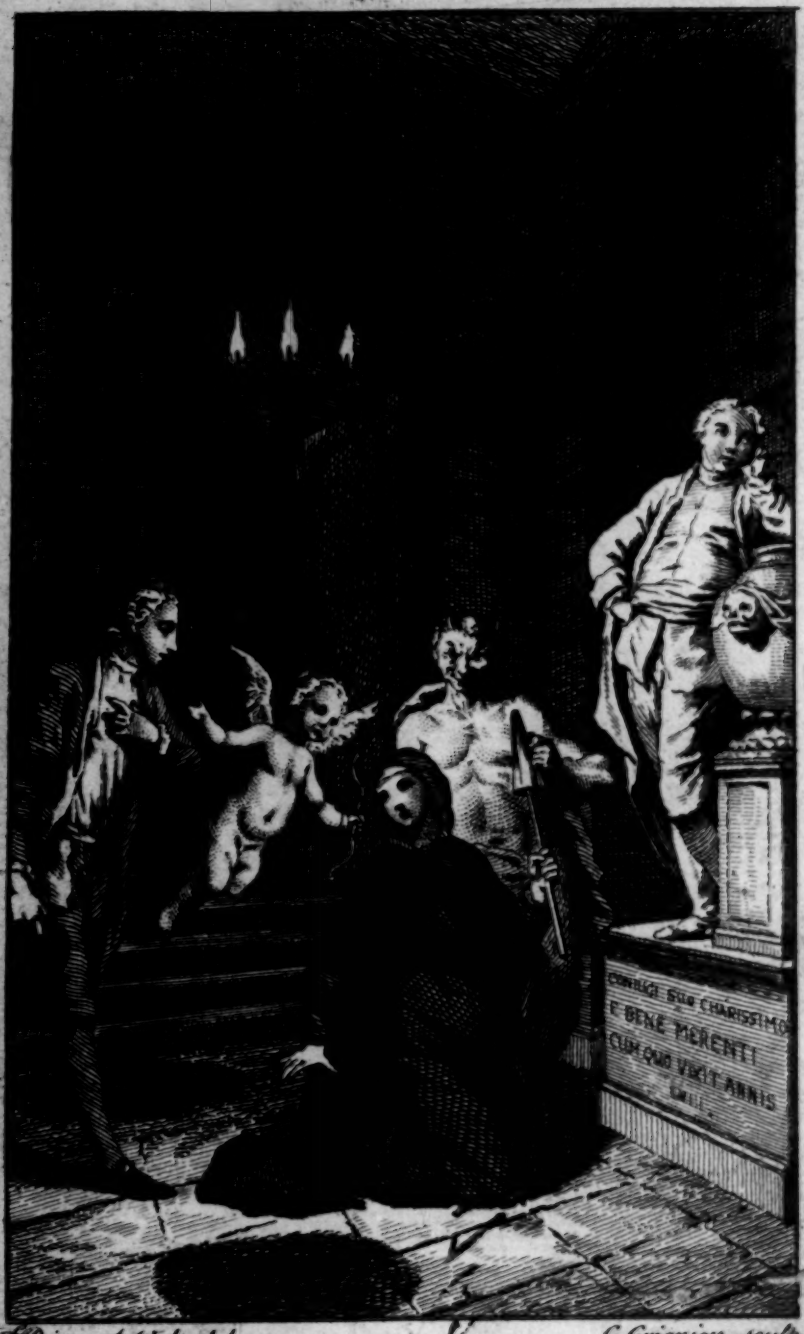
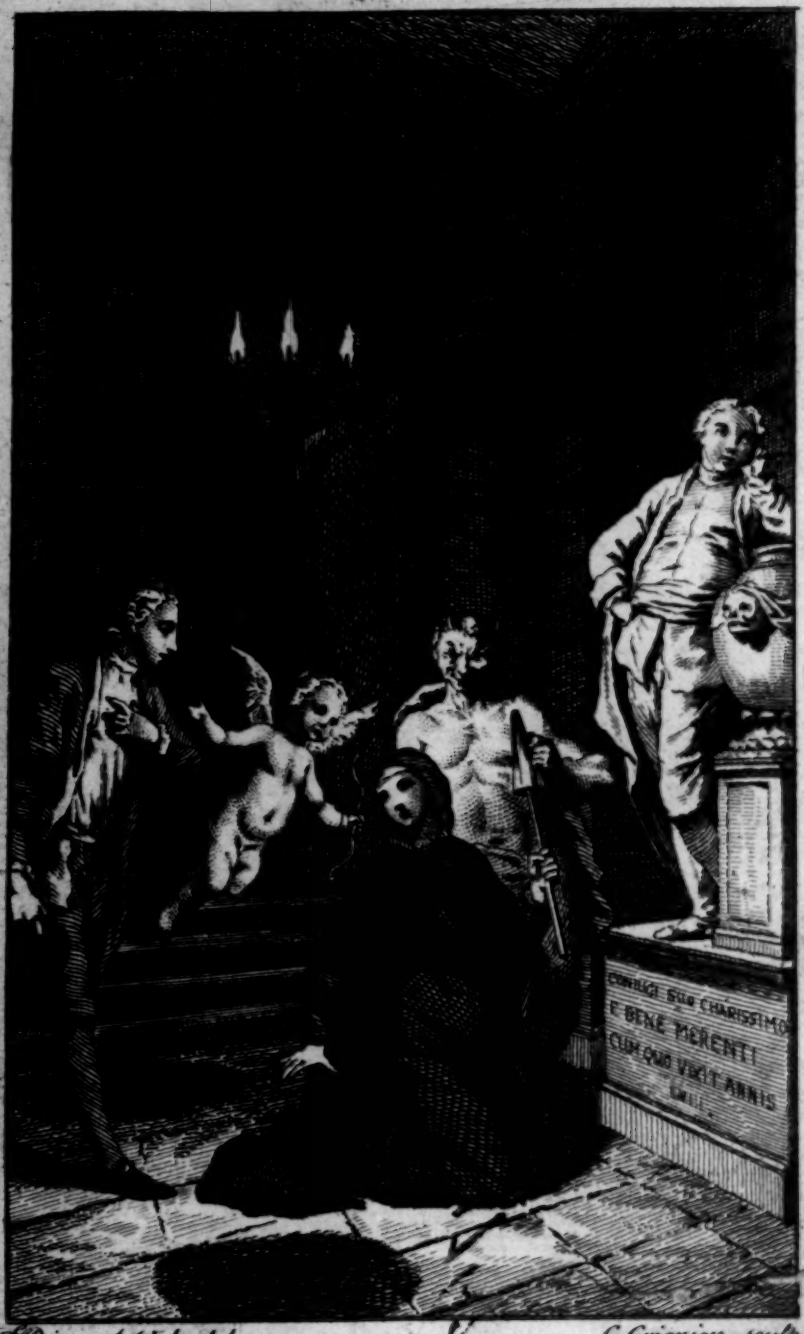


H. inv. S. Wale del. *C. Grignion sculp.*

Ecce . . . . sine luce facem!
Ergo assume novas . . . . flammas.

Ovid.



H. inv. S. Wale del. *C. Grignion sculp.*

Ecce . . . . sine luce facem!
Ergo assume novas . . . . flammas.

Ovid.

12612.b

THE

MATRONS.

SIX SHORT HISTORIES.

A wall of BRASS, and one of LEAD,
Divide the living and the dead:
Repell'd by this, the gather'd rain
Of tears beats back to earth again;
In t'other the collected ſound
Of groans, when once receiv'd, is drown'd.
'Tis therefore vain one hour to grieve
What time itſelf can ne'er retrieve:
Then quit this flame and take another;
DAME, I adviſe you like a brother.

PRIOR.

LONDON:
Printed for R. and J. DODSLEY, in Pall-mall.
M DCC LXII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

DEDICATION

TO

THE MATRONS

OF

Great Britain and Ireland.

LADIES,

BE not alarmed at this addreſs; no rude common-place invective is here intended: and though the following Stories may be thought to bear ſomewhat hard upon your

A Sex,

Sex, a moment's reflection will convince you that this miſcellany is in effect a real panegyric; ſince to compile it (ſhort as it is) we have been obliged to ranſack the mouldy volumes of Antiquity, and to take a voyage as far as China.

The richeſt diamond-mine does not contain all true brilliants: why then ſhould it be a diſcredit to your ſex to have afforded a few inſtances of frailty and miſconduct? The more we are diſpoſed to blame the levity or wantonneſs of thoſe Widows, whoſe weeds

are

are only a cloak for immodeſty, or a lure for ſolicitation, the more we muſt admire the virtue and prudence of every Lady, whoſe conduct has been the very reverſe. The moſt virulent of your adverſaries cannot deny but he ſees moſt inſtances of the latter kind.

By this time we may venture to aſſure the Fair Reader, that this Publication proceeds not from the warm reſentment of ſome diſappointed lover, who being diſcarded by his SYLVIA would revenge his quarrel upon her whole ſex; neither is it a diſcharge of

the accumulated ſpleen of ſome ſurly old bachelor, who would fain retort upon the Ladies thoſe ill humours which have baniſhed him from their converſe: on the contrary, it comes from a ſincere admirer of their elegant ſex; from one who has its intereſt ſo much at heart, that he wiſhes no individual of it ever were to act amiſs.

Having met with half a dozen pleaſant ſtories on the ſame ſubject, the Editor has here thrown them together—with the primary intention of enlivening a dull or vacant

vacant hour—but not without the further moral view of deterring the Fair Reader from falling into that miſconduct, which is here ſo pleaſantly expoſed to ridicule. She will here learn, that female Virtue never is ſo near its fall, as when it thinks itſelf ſecure; and that when it leaſt appears in danger, then it moſt ſhould be upon its guard: ſhe will alſo learn, that when the heart is ſoftened by grief, it is liable to yield to other impreſſions; and that one deviation from the ſtraight road of virtue leads into a laby-

rinth of errors, whence it is hardly poſſible to return.

Such important leſſons will the ſlighteſt novel ſuggeſt to the well-diſpoſed mind. And that this ſmall Collection may afford its Readers ſome other uſe beſides that of mere amuſement, that it may make them not only MERRY, but WISE, is the ſincere wiſh of,

LADIES,

Your moſt devoted Servant,

THE EDITOR.

Thomas Percy.

CONTENTS.

THE EPHESIAN MATRON, Page 1

The CHINESE MATRON, 19

The FRENCH MATRON, 89

The BRITISH MATRON, 111

The TURKISH MATRON, 187

The ROMAN MATRON, 223

☞ *The two first are new Translations.*

In Muliebrem levitatem ab autoribus paſſim multa ſcribuntur. Fortaſſe falſo interdum finguntur plurima, nihil tamen impedit ridentem dicere verum & fabuloſis narrationibus, quas philoſophia non rejicit, exprimere quid obeſſe poſſit in moribus.

Jo. Sarisburiensis.

ERRATA:

Page 43. *note*, *for* opinions, *read* doctrines.

85. *l.* 6. *for* resolved, *r.* resolving.

116. *l.* 13. *for* to her, *r.* for her.

117. *l.* 11. *for* young husband, *r.* worthy youth.

126. *l.* 12. *r.* his own age.

THE

EPHESIAN MATRON.

From PETRONIUS.

EK
7

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE EPHESIAN MATRON.

From the Latin of PETRONIUS.

PETRONIUS's Introduction.

* * * * * * * * *

EUMOLPIUS, in order to keep up the ſpirit of the converſation, began to entertain us with little ſtories. His diſcourſe turned chiefly upon the frailty of women; how ſoon they

forgot their moſt favoured lovers; that there was no woman ſo modeſt or conſtant, as not to be hurried away by a new paſſion, even to the higheſt degree of extravagance. In confirmation of this, he ſaid, he would not trouble us with the tragedies of antiquity, nor with ſtories well known to all the world, but would tell us an adventure which happened within his own memory, if we would but lend him our attention. Having by this preamble drawn all our eyes and ears upon him, he thus began.

The HISTORY.

THERE was at Epheſus a matron in ſuch high repute for her chaſtity, that the women even of the neighbouring countries came out of curioſity to ſee her. This lady having loſt her huſband, was not content to attend the funeral, according to the cuſtom of the country, with her hair diſhevelled and to beat her breaſt before the people; ſhe would needs follow the defunct into the ſepulchre; and having laid him, according to the Grecian

manner, in a vaulted dome, would watch the corpſe herſelf, and weep over it night and day.

Thus reſolved to give herſelf up to affliction, and even to die of hunger and neglect, the endeavours of her parents to diſſuade her were fruitleſs, as were alſo thoſe of all her other relations. Laſt of all, the magiſtrates themſelves met with a repulſe, and were obliged in the end to give her up. Every body bewailed this exemplary lady, as a dead perſon, for ſhe had now languiſhed four or five days without taking any food.

This unhappy widow was attended by a faithful and affectionate maid-ſervant, who mingled her tears with hers, and renewed the light

light as often as it was burnt out. Her lady was now become the whole talk of the city; and it was agreed by every body that ſhe was a true, ſhining pattern of chaſtity and conjugal love.

It happened at this time that the governor of the province had ordered ſome robbers to be hung upon gibbets * near the ſame vault where the virtuous matron lamented over the body of her dear huſband. Accordingly on the following night, the ſoldier, who was ſet to guard the gibbets leſt any one ſhould ſteal away the bodies and bury

---

* The original ſays, "hung upon croſſes." This was the antient puniſhment.

them, perceived a light in the monument, and heard lamentations as from a perſon in affliction. From the common infirmity of human nature, he had a ſtrong curioſity to know who it was, and what was the matter.

He deſcended therefore into the ſepulchre, and, ſurprized at the ſight of a very beautiful woman, ſtood ſtaring as if he had ſeen a ſpectre. But when he had caſt his eyes on the corpſe, which lay ſtretched out before him, and had conſidered the tears and disfigured face of the lady, he at length imagined what was the caſe; that ſhe was ſome poor afflicted perſon, who abandoned herſelf to deſpair for the loſs of him who there lay dead.

Upon

Upon this he fetched his little ſupper into the monument, and began to exhort her not to perſiſt longer in an uſeleſs ſorrow, but to baniſh from her breaſt ſighs and groans, which could nothing avail her nor the dead. He urged to her, that all mankind muſt make their departure in the ſame manner, and muſt all go to the ſame place; forgetting none of thoſe arguments which are wont to heal the moſt afflicted minds. But ſhe, the more irritated by a conſolement ſo little expected or defired, redoubled her grief, beat her boſom with more violence, and ſcattered her hairs all over the breaſt of the deceaſed.

The ſoldier, notwithſtanding this, was not diſcouraged; but with the

ſame

ſame perſuaſions endeavoured to prevail on her to take ſome refreſhment; till the ſervant gained over, doubtleſs, by the ſmell of the wine, as much as by his arguments, accepted an invitation made to them both with ſo much humanity; and as ſoon as ſhe had pretty heartily recruited her ſpirits with the wine and victuals, began herſelf to attack the obſtinacy of her miſtreſs.

And pray, madam, what good will it do, ſaid ſhe, to die of hunger; to bury yourſelf alive; and to ſurrender up your ſoul to fate before it is demanded?

'Think you the Dead, or clay-cold aſhes care,
'What face of grief their ſad ſurvivors wear?'

What, would you raiſe the dead again

again to life in ſpite of fate! Truſt me, you had better lay aſide a weakneſs of which none but a woman could be capable. Enjoy the bleſſing of light, while it will be allowed you: the corpſe, which is here before your eyes, ſufficiently ſhews the value of life, and ſhould teach you to make a better uſe of it.

A perſon is never heard with indifference, who preſſes to eat on ſuch occaſions; one eaſily ſuffers one's ſelf to be perſuaded to live. Thus the matron, tamed by her long abſtinence, at length was prevailed on, and ſwallowed down the food with no leſs eagerneſs than her waiting-maid had done before her.

As to what followed, we all know that temptations uſually ſucceed good eating and drinking. With the ſame ſoft and inſinuating addreſs with which the ſoldier had prevailed on the lady to live, with the very ſame he attacked her modeſty. The chaſte lady could not help thinking him a good handſome young fellow, and one that had a great deal to ſay for himſelf. Nor did the Abigail forget to perform all manner of good offices on this occaſion; often repeating,

'And will you then reſiſt love's dear delights,
'Nor think how ſweetly time or place invites?'

Not to detain you too long with my tale, the matron obſerved the ſame

ſame abſtinence with regard to her perſon, as ſhe had before done as to her appetite; and the ſoldier obtained a complete victory over both.

They ſpent together not only this firſt wedding night, but all the next day, and even the day after. The doors of the tomb were ſo faſt ſhut, that whoever had come to the monument, whether friend or ſtranger, would have had no kind of doubt, but that this pattern of virtue and conjugal affection, had expired upon the body of her deceaſed huſband.

The ſoldier, charmed with the beauty of the lady, and with the ſecret of his good fortune, laid out all his pay in good cheer, and ſoon

as

as ever it was night brought it all into the monument. In the mean time the relations of one of the malefactors, finding that the guard was grown negligent, took down the body under cover of the night, and beſtowed upon it funeral honours.

The poor ſoldier, thus over-reached while he loitered away his time in pleaſure, finding on the morrow one of the gibbets without a body, and grievouſly alarmed with the fear of puniſhment, went and told his miſtreſs all that had happened; adding, that he was reſolved not to wait for the ſentence of a court-martial, but would do juſtice upon himſelf, and with the ſword in his hands puniſh his neg-

ligence.

ligence. The only favour he beg-ed of her was, to take care of his interment, and to commit his body to the tomb, fatal at once to her ſpouſe and her gallant.

The lady was no leſs charitable than ſhe was chaſte. The gods for-bid, ſaid ſhe, that I ſhould behold at once the funerals of two perſons ſo dear to me. I had rather hang up the dead, than deſtroy the liv-ing. In conſequence of this pru-dent determination, ſhe bade him drag her huſband's corpſe out of the coffin, and hang it upon the gib-bet, whence the other body had been ſtolen.

The ſoldier profited by the inge-nious advice of ſo diſcreet a coun-ſellor; and the next day all the people

people wondered how the corpſe of the gentleman deceaſed could find its way up to the top of the gibbet.

THE

THE

CHINESE MATRON.

From P. DU HALDE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE CHINESE MATRON.

From the French Verſion publiſhed by P. DU HALDE.

The Chineſe Author's Preface.

WEALTH and the advantages reſulting from it, are like an agreeable dream of a few moments. Honour and reputation may be compared to a ſhining cloud, that is quickly blown away. The affection of the neareſt

relations is frequently but a vain appearance. The moſt tender friendſhips are ſometimes converted into the moſt deadly hatred. Let us not be fond of wearing a collar, becauſe it is of gold; nor chains, becauſe they are of diamond. Let our deſires be reaſonable and moderate: let us free ourſelves from all attachment to ſublunary creatures; they are a mere heap of ſand, in which there is no ſtability. The great means to preſerve our joy and liberty is to be independent of all other perſons.

The ſects of Tao and Fo, though very different from the ſect of Confucius, agree with it in their ſentiments of the grand duties of fathers, ſons, and brothers; and have never attempted

attempted to weaken or oppoſe them. It is notwithſtanding true, that the love of parents for their children ought not to make them too ſolicitous about ſettling them in the world; according to the proverb, "the fortune of children ought to "be of their own making."

With regard to huſband and wife, they are united by the cloſeſt and moſt ſolemn ties; yet divorce and death frequently diſſolve them: this we learn from that old ſaying; "the huſband and wife are like "the birds of the field; in the "evening they meet in the ſame "grove, and ſeparate in the morn-"ing." It muſt however be confeſſed, there is leſs reaſon to fear an exceſs in the affection between pa-

rents and children, than in conjugal love; the latter is cheriſhed, and grows in ſecret by the cloſe intimacy and mutual confidence of the wedded pair: it is not uncommon for a young wife to gain an intire aſcendant over her huſband; and this cauſes a ſon frequently to entertain a coldneſs for his father. Theſe are glaring faults, which people of merit know how to avoid.

On this head I ſhall relate a paſſage in the life of the famous Chuang-tſe.—But I proteſt, before I begin, that I have no intention to weaken the union that ought to ſubſiſt between the wedded pair: I would only ſhew, that we ought carefully to diſtinguiſh between true

and

and falſe merit in the diſpoſal of our affection; and as it is very dangerous to yield ourſelves up to a blind fondneſs, ſo it is of great importance to our quiet to preſerve in ourſelves a due moderation: generally ſpeaking, he who labours inceſſantly to conquer his paſſions, will at length ſubdue them: wiſdom will be his portion, and a ſweet and tranquil life the reward of his labours.

The

The HISTORY.

TOwards the end of the dynaſty of Cheû appeared in China a celebrated philoſopher named Chuang-tſe; he was born at a place in the kingdom of Sòng, where he had a ſmall government: he became diſciple of a ſage very famous in thoſe days, and author of the ſect of Tao; his name was Ly-eul; but as he came into the world with white hairs he was called Lao-tſe; that is to ſay, "the infant old man."

As

As often as Chuang-tſe cloſed his eyes, his ſleep was interrupted by the following dream; he thought he was turned into a large butterfly, fluttering up and down, one while in an orchard, another while in a meadow. This dream made ſo ſtrong an impreſſion on his mind, that even, when he awoke, he thought he had wings fixed to his ſhoulders, and was ready to fly: he knew not what to think of a dream ſo frequent and ſo uncommon.

One day when his maſter Lao-tſe had been diſcourſing upon one of the canonical books, he took the advantage of a moment's pauſe, and propoſed to him the dream which ſo often took poſſeſſion of his fancy.

Be attentive, ſaid this wonderful man, who was ignorant of none of the ſecrets of nature; the cauſe of this importunate dream is to be ſought for in the times preceding thoſe in which you live; know, that at the time when the chaos began to be reduced to order, and this univerſe was formed, you were then a beautiful white butterfly. The waters were the firſt production of heaven; the ſecond were the trees and plants which embelliſhed the earth; for the whole became fair and blooming in an inſtant. This charming butterfly wandered about at his eaſe, and enjoyed the fragrance of the moſt exquiſite flowers; he knew even how to extract infinite pleaſures from the ſun

and moon; he procured to himſelf at length ſupplies of vigour which rendered him immortal; his wings were large and almoſt circular; his flight was rapid.

One day, as he was taking his diverſion, he fixed himſelf upon the flowers of the garden of pleaſure belonging to the great queen (into which he had found means to introduce himſelf) and ſpoilt ſome buds that were juſt beginning to open. The myſterious bird to whom the care of this garden had been intruſted, gave the butterfly a blow with his beak, of which he died.

The body of the butterfly became lifeleſs; but the ſoul, which was immortal, remained intire and unhurt: it hath paſſed into other bodies,

dies, and animates at preſent that of Chuang-tſe. Hence you derive this happy diſpoſition to become a great philoſopher, capable of elevating yourſelf, of acquiring the doctrines I teach, of purifying your ſoul by an intire detachment, and of perfecting yourſelf in a thorough knowledge of the mind and heart.

From that time Lao-tſe diſcovered to his diſciple the profoundeſt myſteries of his doctrine; and the diſciple found himſelf all of a ſudden become another perſon: thenceforth, in conformity to his firſt original, he had in reality the inclination of a butterfly, which is to flutter about continually, without fixing on any object however charming: that is to ſay, Chuang-tſe began to

diſ-

diſcover the emptineſs of every thing which employs and captivates mens attention: the moſt ſplendid fortune was not capable of tempting him; his heart became inſenſible to the greateſt advantages; he found them as devoid of ſolidity as the thin vapour which forms the clouds, and is the ſport of winds; and as unſtable as the water of a brook whoſe courſe is extremely rapid. In fine, his ſoul no longer attached itſelf to any thing.

Lao-tſe, ſeeing that his diſciple had intirely diſengaged himſelf from the amuſements of the age, and had a reliſh for truth, let him into the myſteries of the Tao-te-king; for the five thouſand words of which that book is compoſed

are

are all myſterious: he no longer concealed any thing from ſuch a diſciple.

Chuang-tſe, on his part, gave himſelf up intirely to ſtudy; he read inceſſantly, he meditated, he put in practice the doctrine of his maſter, and by fathoming, purifying, and refining his interior, if I may ſo expreſs myſelf, he perfectly comprehended the difference between what is viſible and what is imperceptible in the human frame; between the body, which is corruptible; and the ſoul, which in quitting its fleſhly abode acquires a new life by a kind of wonderful transformation.

Chuang-tſe, ſtruck with theſe lights, threw up the office which he

he poſſeſſed; he even took his leave of Lao-tſe, and ſet out to travel, in hopes of making fine acquiſitions of knowledge, and new diſcoveries of nature and truth.

But how ardently ſoever he thirſted after his favourite repoſe and diſengagement of heart, he did not renounce the pleaſures of matrimony; he was ſucceſſively married three times: his firſt wife was ſuddenly ſnatched away by a diſtemper; the ſecond he divorced for a breach of fidelity; the third ſhall be the ſubject of this hiſtory.

She was called Tien, and was deſcended from the kings of Tſi *.

* One of the little kingdoms into which the Chineſe empire was formerly divided: it is at preſent the province of Chan-ſi.

Chuang-tſe had acquired a great reputation in this kingdom; and one of the heads of that family, taken with his merit, gave him his daughter in marriage.

This new wife far excelled the two former: ſhe was well made; of a fine complexion for red and white; and to an amiable ſweetneſs of temper had joined a great vivacity of wit: ſo that although the philoſopher was not naturally a man of warm paſſions, he tenderly loved this laſt wife.

Though Chuang-tſe had renounced buſineſs, the king of Tſû *, be-

* A ſmall kingdom, at preſent the province of Hû-quang.

ing

ing informed of his high reputation, took a reſolution to draw him to his court; he deputed ſeveral of his Mandarines, with rich preſents of gold and ſilk, to invite him to enter into his cabinet and take upon him the charge of prime miniſter.

Chuang-tſe, far from being dazzled with theſe offers, returned for anſwer the following fable: "A young heifer deſigned for ſacrifice, and delicately fed for a long time, marched in pomp, loaded with all the ornaments of a victim: In the middle of her triumph, ſhe perceived, near the road, ſome oxen yoaked, and ſweating at the plow. The ſight of theſe redoubled her pride; but when ſhe was brought into the

" temple, and ſaw the knife lifted " up to diſpatch her, ſhe would " gladly have been in the place " of thoſe whoſe unhappy lot ſhe " had before deſpiſed.—Her wiſhes " were fruitleſs, for ſhe loſt her " life." It was thus that Chuang-tſe courteouſly refuſed the king's preſents and offers.

Soon after he retired with his wife into the kingdom of Song, which was his native country. He choſe for his abode the delightful mountain Nan-hoa, in order to lead a philoſophical life, and to taſte, remote from noiſe and tumult, the innocent pleaſures of the country.

One day as he walked forth, wrapt in thought, towards the foot of

of the mountain, he found himſelf inſenſibly got into the burying-place belonging to the neighbouring habitations. He was ſtruck with their number. Alas! ſaid he, ſighing, here all are equal; here is no longer rank nor diſtinction; the moſt ignorant are here confounded with the wiſe: a ſepulchre is at laſt the eternal abode of all mankind; when we have once taken up our lodging in this habitation of the dead, we ſhall never more return to life.

Having employed himſelf for ſome time in theſe melancholy reflections, he proceeded forwards along the burying-place, and before he was aware, found himſelf near a ſepulchre newly erected. The little

mound made of tempered earth, was not yet quite dry. Near it was ſeated a young lady, whom at firſt he did not perceive. She was in deep mourning, that is to ſay, clad in a long white garment of coarſe ſack-cloth, without any ſeam. She ſat cloſe by the tomb, and held in her hand a white fan, with which ſhe fanned inceſſantly the upper part of the ſepulchre.

Chuang-tſe was ſurpriſed at this adventure: May I take the liberty to aſk you, ſaid he, whoſe tomb this is, and why you give yourſelf ſo much trouble to fan it? There is ſome myſtery in this, which I cannot unravel. The young lady without getting up, as civility ſeemed

ſeemed to require, and continuing ſtill to waft her fan, muttered a few words between her teeth, and ſhed tears, in ſuch a manner as ſhewed ſhe was rather hindered from explaining herſelf by ſome ſecret ſhame, than by the natural modeſty of her ſex on being thus accoſted by a man.

At length ſhe made him the following anſwer: You ſee a widow at the foot of her huſband's grave; death unfortunately hath ſnatched him from me: he, whoſe bones reſt in this tomb, was dear to me while he lived; he loved me with equal tenderneſs; he knew not how to part from me when he died. His laſt words were as follows; My dear ſpouſe, ſaid he, if hereafter you

ſhould ever think of a ſecond marriage, I conjure you to wait till the top of my tomb, which is to be of moiſt and tempered earth, is become quite dry; I will then allow you to marry again. Wherefore reflecting that the ſurface of this earth, which is newly heaped up, will not ſoon dry of itſelf, I am continually fanning it to diſperſe the moiſture.

At ſo frank a confeſſion the philoſopher could hardly keep his countenance. He nevertheleſs maintained his gravity. This woman, ſaid he within himſelf, is in great haſte; how dares ſhe boaſt of loving her huſband, and of being beloved by him? what would they have done, if they had hated each other?

other? Then addreſſing himſelf to her, You deſire, ſaid he, to have the top of the tomb quickly dry: but as you are of a delicate make, you will be ſoon tired, and your ſtrength will fail you; let me lend you aſſiſtance. Immediately the young lady got up, and making a deep courtſey *, accepted his offer, and gave him a fan like to her own.

Then Chuang-tſe, who poſſeſſed the art of raiſing ſpirits, called them to his aſſiſtance. He ſtruck the tomb three or four times with the fan, and the moiſture diſappeared. The young lady having thanked her benefactor with a gay

* The Chineſe ladies perform their reverence by a courtſey, as in Europe.

and

and ſmiling countenance, drew from her hair a ſilver bodkin and preſented it to him, together with the fan which ſhe had been uſing; begging him to accept of this ſmall preſent as a token of her gratitude. Chuang-tſe refuſed the bodkin, but kept the fan: after which the lady retired, extremely well pleaſed; her joy appearing in her countenance and geſture.

As for Chuang-tſe he remained quite aſtoniſhed; and wholly taken up in reflecting on the ſtrangeneſs of the adventure, returned to his houſe. Sitting down in his hall, where he thought himſelf alone, he looked for ſome time earneſtly at the fan, and then repeated the following verſes:

" Would

" Would not one be apt to ſay
" that two perſons join themſelves
" together out of ſome remains
" of hatred, which they bore to
" each other in their former
" life * ? And that they unite in
" marriage, in order to continue
" their animoſities as long as poſſi-
" ble ? It is thus, I obſerve, that
" a man is unworthily forgotten
" after his death, by the perſon
" whom he had loved moſt dearly.
" How ſtupid then muſt he be to
" love during his life ſuch an in-
" conſtant heart ?"

The lady Tien ſtood, unperceived, behind her huſband. When

---

* Alluding to the opinions of the Metempſychoſis or tranſmigration of ſouls.

ſhe

ſhe had heard the words above-mentioned, ſhe advanced a little, and ſhewing herſelf, May one know, ſaid ſhe, what makes you ſigh, and whence comes the fan which you hold in your hand? Chuang-tſe related to her the hiſtory of the young widow, and all that had paſſed at the tomb of her huſband.

He had ſcarce finiſhed his ſtory, but the lady Tien, with a countenance inflamed with indignation and choler, and as if the young widow had been before her eyes, loaded her with a thouſand curſes, calling her a ſhame to human nature and a diſgrace to her ſex. Then looking at Chuang-tſe, I have ſaid it, and it is true, that

that ſhe is a monſter of inſenſibility. Is it poſſible to find any where ſo bad a heart as hers?

Chuang-tſe, without liſtening much to her words, but following the train of his own reflections, pronounced four verſes to the following effect:

"While a huſband is living, "what wife is there that doth not "flatter and praiſe him? Is he "dead; ſhe is ready to ſnatch up "the fan, to dry his tomb as ſoon "as poſſible. A picture ſhews "the outſide of an animal; but "it doth not ſhew what is within. "We can view the countenance "of a perſon, but not the heart."

At theſe words Tien threw herſelf into a violent rage. Mankind, ſaid ſhe,

ſhe, are all equal, as to their nature: it is virtue or vice that makes the difference. How can you have the boldneſs to talk in this manner in my preſence?—To condemn all women, and to confound unjuſtly thoſe who have probity, with wretches that do not deſerve to live?—Are not you aſhamed to paſs judgment in ſo unjuſt a manner? Are not you afraid to be puniſhed for it?

To what purpoſe ſo many exclamations? replied the philoſopher. Confeſs ſincerely, if I ſhould die this moment, and leave you behind in the flower of your age, thus beautiful and ſprightly, could you bear to let five or even three years paſs away, as the rites ordain, without

out thinking of a ſecond marriage?

Is it not ſaid, replied the lady, That a Mandarine, who is faithful to his prince, renounces all employments after the death of his lawful maſter? That a virtuous widow never thinks of a ſecond huſband? Was there ever known an inſtance of a lady of my rank, who having been once married hath paſſed into another family; or hath quitted the nuptial bed after the death of her ſpouſe? If by misfortune I ſhould be reduced to a ſtate of widowhood, know that I ſhould be incapable of ſuch an action as would be a reproach to my ſex; and that a ſecond marriage would never tempt me, I do not ſay during the term of three

three or five years, but during life. No, ſuch a thought could never enter into my head, even in a dream. This is my reſolution, and nothing can ſhake it.

Such promiſes, replied Chuang-tſe, are eaſily made, but not ſo eaſily kept. Theſe words put the lady ſtill more out of humour, and ſhe broke out into words not very reſpectful: Know, ſaid ſhe, that a woman hath often a ſoul more noble and more ſteady in its affections than a man of your character. Can any one ſay that you are a perfect pattern of fidelity? Your firſt wife dies; ſoon after you take a ſecond; this again you divorce; I in ſhort am the third. You judge of others by yourſelf; and for this reaſon

ſon you judge ill. As for us women who are married to philoſophers, and profeſs, like our huſbands, to obſerve an auſtere virtue, we are much leſs at liberty to marry again: if we ſhould do it, we ſhould become juſt objects of deriſion. But wherefore all this language to me? and why do you take a pleaſure in giving me uneaſineſs? You enjoy your health very well; why then do you ſeek to give me diſquiet, by making the melancholy ſuppoſition that you are dead, and that——

Then of a ſudden ſeizing the fan, which her huſband held in his hand, ſhe ſnatched it from him, and out of mere ſpite tore it in pieces. Compoſe yourſelf, ſaid Chuang-tſe, your quick reſentment gives me pleaſure;

I am overjoyed to ſee you take fire on ſuch an occaſion. By degrees, the lady grew calm, and they changed their diſcourſe.

A few days after Chuang-tſe fell dangerouſly ill, and was quickly at the laſt extremity. The lady his ſpouſe never quitted his bedſide; ſhe was bathed in tears, and ſobbed continually. As far as I can perceive, ſaid Chuang-tſe, I ſhall not recover from this diſtemper; this evening or to-morrow I muſt bid you an eternal adieu: What pity that you have torn in pieces the fan which I brought; it would have ſerved you to dry the bed of chalk and earth, which is to cover my tomb.

Ah!

Ah! for goodneſs ſake, Sir, cried the lady, in your preſent condition do not give way to ſuſpicions ſo diſturbing to yourſelf, and ſo injurious to me. I have ſtudied our books; I know the rites; I have beſtowed my heart once; it ſhall never be another's: this I ſwear to you; and if you doubt my ſincerity, I conſent, I even demand to die before you, that you may be fully perſuaded of my faithful attachment.

It is enough, replied Chuang-tſe; I am ſatisfied of your conſtancy. Alas! I find I am expiring; my eyes will never behold you more. After theſe words he ceaſed to breathe, and remained without the leaſt ſign of life.

Then the lady, all in tears, and giving loud ſhrieks, embraced the corpſe, and held it claſped in her arms a long time. She then cloathed it handſomely, and laid it in the coffin: ſhe afterwards put herſelf into deep mourning. Day and night ſhe made all the neighbourhood reſound with her groans and lamentations, ſhewing all the ſigns of the moſt piercing grief. She even carried it to ſuch exceſs, that one would have ſaid ſhe was diſtracted; ſhe would take neither reſt nor nouriſhment.

The inhabitants of both ſides of the mountain came to pay their laſt reſpects to the defunct, whom they knew to be a ſage of the firſt rank. When the company began to retire,

there

there arrived a young ſtudent, well-made and of a fine complexion. Nothing could be more gallant than his dreſs; he had on a robe of violet-coloured ſilk, and a ſtudent's cap exceeding neat; his girdle was embroidered, and his ſhoes extremely elegant and fine. This young lord gave them to underſtand that he alſo came from the kingdom of Tſû. It is ſome years, ſaid he, ſince I declared to the philoſopher Chuang-tſe a reſolution I had taken up to become his diſciple; I came here with this deſign, and I learn at my arrival that he is dead.—What a misfortune! what a loſs!

Immediately he laid aſide his coloured habit, and cauſed one of deep

mourning to be brought him: afterwards going up to the coffin, he hit the earth four times with his forehead, and cried out with a voice interrupted by ſobs; Wiſe and learned Chuang! how unhappy is your diſciple, that he could not find you alive, and profit at leiſure by your leſſons! I will at leaſt teſtify my regard and gratitude, by remaining here in mourning during the ſpace of an hundred days.—After theſe words he proſtrated himſelf four times on the earth, which he watered with his tears.

Afterwards he deſired to pay his compliments to the lady; who excuſed herſelf three or four times from appearing. Wang-tſun, (for that

that was the name of this young lord) repreſented, that according to the antient rites, a widow might ſuffer herſelf to be ſeen, when the friends of her deceaſed huſband paid her a viſit. I have ſtill more reaſon, added he, to enjoy this privilege, ſince I was to have boarded with the learned Chuang-tſe in quality of his diſciple.

At theſe inſtances the lady ſuffered herſelf to be prevailed on; ſhe came forth from the inner apartments, and with a ſlow pace advanced into the hall, to receive the compliments of condolance. Theſe were made in a few words, and in general terms.

As ſoon as the lady ſaw the fine behaviour, the wit, and accompliſhments of this young lord, ſhe was charmed with them, and felt in her heart the emotions of an infant paſſion, of which ſhe was not thoroughly ſenſible at firſt, only ſhe wiſhed that he was not to leave her ſo ſoon.

Wang-tſun prevented her wiſhes by ſaying, Since I have had the misfortune to loſe my maſter, whoſe memory will be always dear to me, I ſhould be glad to take ſome ſmall lodging near, where I may reſide during the hundred days of mourning, at the end of which I will aſſiſt at the funeral. I ſhould alſo be very glad to read during that time the works of this illuſtrious philoſopher; they

they will ſupply the place of thoſe leſſons of which his death deprives me.

It will be an honour to our own houſe, replied the lady; and I ſee no ſort of inconvenience in it. She accordingly prepared a ſmall repaſt, and cauſed it to be ſerved up. At the ſame time ſhe laid upon a very neat ſalver the compoſitions of Chuang-tſe; to which ſhe added the book Tao, a preſent from the famous Lao-tſe; and came to offer them herſelf to Wang-tſun, who received them with his natural politeneſs.

On one ſide the hall, where the coffin ſtood, were two chambers which opened into the hall; theſe were appointed for the young lord to

lodge

lodge in. The young widow came frequently into this hall to weep over her huſband's coffin; and as ſhe retired failed not to pay her compliments to Wang-tſun, who came out to ſalute her. In theſe frequent interviews many a glance eſcaped them, which betrayed the hearts of them both.

Wang-tſun was already half captivated, and the young widow completely ſo: what gave her pleaſure was, that they were in a retired part of the country, and in a houſe little frequented, where any failure in the rites of mourning would be unobſerved. But as it always coſts a woman a good deal to make the firſt advances, ſhe bethought herſelf of the following expedient. She

cauſed

cauſed ſecretly to be brought to her an old domeſtic that waited on the young lord: ſhe made him drink ſeveral cups of wine; ſhe flattered and coaxed him: ſhe afterwards by degrees brought in the queſtion, whether his maſter was married: which he anſwered in the negative. Well, continued ſhe, and what qualifications does he require in a wife?

The ſervant, whom the wine had rendered gay, replied without heſitation, I have heard him declare, if he could but find one who reſembled you, he ſhould be at the very ſummit of his deſires. This delicate matron inſtantly anſwered, Do not you tell me untruths? Can you aſſure me that he ſpoke in this manner?

manner? Can an old man like me, replied the other, be capable of telling lies; or have the front to impoſe on a perſon of your merit. Very well then, proceeded ſhe, you are a proper perſon to bring about a marriage between me and your maſter; nor ſhall your labour be thrown away: ſpeak of me to him; and if you find he approves of it, aſſure him that I ſhall eſteem it a great happineſs to become his bride.

There is no need of ſounding him upon this article, ſaid the valet, ſince he hath frankly confeſſed to me, that ſuch a marriage would be intirely to his ſatisfaction: but he thought it not practicable, for as he was a diſciple of the defunct, it would be cenſured by the world.

This

"This objection is a mere trifle, replied the paſſionate widow; your maſter was not really the diſciple of Chuang-tſe, he had only promiſed to become ſo, which is a very different thing: beſides, as we live retired in the country, who is there can talk of our marriage? Go, and ſhould any other objection ariſe, you have addreſs enough to remove it: I ſhall not fail to reward your ſervices. At the ſame time ſhe poured him out many cups of excellent wine to put him into the better humour.

He promiſed immediately to ſet about it; but as he was going ſhe called him back: Hark you, ſaid ſhe, if your lord accepts my offers, come immediately and bring me the

the news, be it at whatever hour of the day or night; for I ſhall expect you with impatience.

As ſoon as ſhe had left him, ſhe remained in extreme diſquietude; ſhe walked many times into the hall on diverſe pretences; but in reality it was to be near the young lord's chamber. By favour of the dark ſhe liſtened at his window, flattering herſelf that they were talking over the affair which ſhe had ſo much at heart.

Afterwards paſſing by the coffin, ſhe heard a noiſe; her heart miſgave her. Ah! ſaid ſhe in great emotion, what if the dead ſhould be returning to life! She hurried back to her chamber, and ſnatching up a lamp, went to ſee what oc-

occaſioned the noiſe. She found the old domeſtic ſtretched out upon the table that was placed before the coffin for burning perfumes, and ſetting on offerings at certain hours. He was laid down to ſleep himſelf ſober, and to work off the fumes of the wine ſhe had given him. Any other perſon would have raiſed an outcry on ſeeing this irreverence ſhewn to the dead; but ſhe durſt not complain, or even awake the drunken ſot. She crept away to bed, but could not poſſibly ſleep.

The next morning ſhe met the old ſervant walking careleſly about, without ever thinking of giving her an anſwer. This coldneſs and ſilence quite diſconcerted her:

her: ſhe called him to her, and having brought him into her chamber, Well, ſaid ſhe, how goes on the affair, which I have entruſted to you? I have done nothing in it, anſwered he drily. Ah! why ſo? replied ſhe: you have doubtleſs forgot my offers to your maſter, or have not repreſented them in a favourable light. I have not forgot them, purſued the domeſtic; my maſter is even inclined to accept them; he thinks them advantageous, and is ſatisfied with your anſwer to the former objection. But he tells me he hath three others that are inſurmountable, and which he is unwilling to diſcloſe to you.

Let

Let me know, ſaid the lady, what thoſe three obſtacles are. They are theſe, replied the old domeſtic, juſt as my maſter expreſſed them. In the firſt place, the coffin of the dead being ſtill expoſed in the hall forms a very melancholy appearance; and how in the midſt of ſuch a ſcene can we rejoice or celebrate a wedding-feſtival? Secondly, the illuſtrious Chuang having loved his wife ſo tenderly, and ſhe having teſtified for him ſuch a paſſionate fondneſs, founded on his great virtue and capacity; there is reaſon to fear that the heart of this lady will ever remain wedded to her firſt huſband, eſpecially when ſhe ſhall find ſo little merit in her ſecond. Thirdly and laſtly, I have

not here my equipage; I have neither money nor furniture; how then can I make the nuptial preſents, or defray the expences? and in this ſolitary place of whom can I borrow? Theſe, madam, are his objections.

If theſe be all, replied the enamoured widow, I ſhall inſtantly remove them. With reſpect to the firſt article; this diſmal cheſt, what does it contain? A lifeleſs body; a corrupt carcaſe; from which there is nothing to hope, and nothing to fear. There is in a corner of my grounds an old ruined building; whither ſome of the neighbouring peaſants ſhall remove the coffin, never more to be ſeen. Thus have

have we ſurmounted the firſt obſtacle.

With regard to the ſecond; To be ſure, my huſband was, as he would be thought to be, a man of rare virtue and capacity truly! Before he married me he had got rid of a ſecond wife, which you will judge was good management. Upon the report of his reputation, which was ill founded enough, the laſt king of Tſû ſent him rich preſents, and would have made him his prime miniſter. He who knew his own incapacity, and found it would be diſcovered in ſuch an employment, betook himſelf to flight, and came here to hide him in this ſolitary place. It is not above a month ſince, walking forth

alone towards the foot of this mountain, he found a young widow fanning the upper part of her huſband's tomb, becauſe ſhe was not to marry again till it was become quite dry. Chuang accoſted her, and to ingratiate himſelf took the fan from her to dry the tomb with more expedition. He afterwards kept the fan as a token of her regard, and brought it hither; but I ſnatched it from him and tore it to pieces. When he lay a dying, he brought this ſtory again upon the carpet, which increaſed our diſagreement. What kindneſs then have I received from him, or what regard hath he ever ſhewn me? Your maſter is young, is fond of ſtudy, and will infallibly become famous

famous for his learning: his birth renders him illuſtrious; he is, like myſelf, of royal blood; there is a wonderful conformity in our circumſtances. It is heaven hath conducted him hither to unite us; and this is our deſtiny.

There only remains the third objection.—As to what regards the preſents and expences of the wedding, I will take care to provide them. Can you think I have been ſo ſimple as not to have made a little hoard out of my ſavings? Here, take theſe twenty taëls*, and carry them to your maſter to buy new cloaths. Haſten to him, and

* In Engliſh money 6 l. 13 s. 4 d.

tell him all I have ſaid. If he gives his conſent, I will go and make preparations for celebrating the marriage this very evening.

The ſervant took the twenty taëls, and related to his maſter all ſhe had ſaid, who at length gave the wiſhed-for conſent. When the lady received the agreeable news, ſhe teſtified her joy a thouſand ways. She immediately threw off her mourning habits; ſhe dreſſed, adorned, and painted herſelf, whilſt by her orders the coffin was conveyed into the old ruined building. The hall was immediately ſwept and cleaned for the nuptial ceremonies; at the ſame time a banquet was got ready, that nothing might be wanting on that joyful occaſion.

Towards evening they perfumed the nuptial bed with the moſt fragrant eſſences. The hall was lighted up with a great number of ſplendid lanthorns, finely illuminated. Upon a table at the bottom of the room ſtood the great nuptial taper of wax. When all was ready, Wang-tſun made his appearance, with a habit and ornaments on his head that very much added to the beauty of his perſon. The lady alſo came to meet him, dreſſed in a long robe of ſilk, richly embroidered. Then placing themſelves beſide each other, over againſt the nuptial taper, they made a charming appearance. Thus placed together, they mutually ſet off each other's perſons; juſt as jewels and

pearls heighten the beauty of cloth of gold, and appear more brilliant themſelves.

After making the uſual reverences, and wiſhing each other all ſorts of proſperity in their marriage, they walked hand in hand into the inner apartments: there they performed the grand ceremony of drinking alternately out of the cup of alliance. After this they ſat down to table.

When the banquet was over, and they were upon the point of going to bed, the young bridegroom was ſuddenly ſeized with moſt horrible convulſions: his countenance was all diſfigured; his eye-brows by turns opened and contracted; his mouth was hideouſly diſtorted: he could

could not move a ſtep; but trying to get upon the bed, fell to the floor: there he lay groveling, beating his breaſt with both his hands, and crying out as loud as he could, that he was ſick to death with a pain at his heart.

The lady, deſperately in love with her new ſpouſe, without conſidering where ſhe was, or her preſent ſituation, threw herſelf upon the body of Wang-tſun. She embraced him; rubbed his breaſt where the diſorder lay, and aſked him what was the nature of his complaint. Wang-tſun was too ill to make her any anſwer: he ſeemed to be at the point of death.

The old ſervant running in at the noiſe, took him up in his arms,

and

and ſhook him. Has my dear Wang-tſun, cried out the lady, ever had theſe fits before? Many times, replied the ſervant; there does not a year paſs, but he is troubled with them; and it is only in the power of one medicine to relieve him. Tell me quickly, ſaid the bride, what this medicine is? The phyſician of the royal family, continued the other, found out a ſecret that is infallible; which is, to take the brains of a man newly killed, and let him drink them in warm wine; then will his convulſions inſtantly ceaſe, and he will recover. The firſt time that this diſorder ſeized him, the king his relation ordered a man to be executed, who had deſerved death, and they gave his

his brains to my maſter, who was cured in an inſtant. But alas! where can we have the ſame remedy now?

But, ſaid the lady, will not the brains of a man, who hath died a natural death, have the ſame effect? In caſe of abſolute neceſſity, replied the old domeſtic, our phyſician told us we might uſe the brains of any dead perſon, provided he hath not been dead too long; becauſe the brains only preſerve their virtue ſo long as they continue moiſt.

Hah! cried the lady, we have nothing to do then but to open my huſband's coffin, and to take thence this ſalutary medicine. I thought of it myſelf, replied the ſervant, but

but durſt not propoſe it, leſt the bare mention ſhould ſtrike you with horror. Why ſo? anſwered ſhe; is not Wang-tſun at preſent my huſband? If there were occaſion for my blood to cure him, I ſhould not ſpare it; and ſhall I ſcruple to meddle with a vile carcaſe?

So ſaying, ſhe left Wang-tſun in the arms of his ſervant; and ſnatching up a hatchet in one hand, and a lamp in the other, away ſhe runs to the old ruined building, where the coffin ſtood. She tucks up her long ſleeves, ſhe graſps the hatchet in both her hands, and diſcharging a great blow on the lid of the coffin, cleaves it in two.

A woman's ſtrength would not have been ſufficient to break the boards, had they been of the uſual thickneſs; but Chuang-tſe, through an exceſs of precaution and a great fondneſs for life, had ordered the lid of his coffin to be made very thin, becauſe he had heard, that perſons in ſome caſes had returned to life after they had appeared to be quite dead.

The lid being thus ſplit at the firſt blow, a few more intirely removed it. This done, ſhe ſtopped a moment to take breath: at the ſame inſtant ſhe heard ſomebody fetch a deep ſigh; and caſting her eyes upon the coffin, ſhe ſaw her huſband move, and afterwards raiſe himſelf upon his ſeat.

One

One may judge what was the ſurprize of the lady Tien. Terribly frighted, ſhe gave a loud ſhriek; her knees bent under her, and ſhe was ſo confounded, that ſhe let the hatchet fall out of her hand.

My dear ſpouſe, ſaid Chuang, help me to get up. As ſoon as he got out of the coffin, he took the lamp, and moved towards her apartment. The lady followed, but with a trembling pace, and ſweating at every pore, becauſe as ſhe had left there young Wang-tſun and his ſervant, they would be the firſt objects to meet her huſband's eyes.

When he entered the chamber, every thing appeared moſt gay and ſplendid; but happily for her, the bridegroom and his old valet had left

left it. Upon this reſuming a little courage, ſhe conſidered how to patch up the affair as well as ſhe could. Wherefore caſting a tender look upon Chuang-tſe; Your poor little ſlave, ſaid ſhe, from the moment of your death hath done nothing but think of you day and night. At length having heard that a noiſe proceeded from the coffin, and calling to mind the many ſtories which are told of dead perſons who have returned to life, I flattered myſelf with hopes that you might be of the number; I therefore ran as faſt as poſſible; I opened the coffin; and, thank heaven! my hopes are anſwered. What a happineſs for me to recover again ſo dear a huſband,

whoſe

whoſe loſs I have never ceaſed to bewail!

I am obliged to you, ſaid Chuang-tſe, for ſuch a tender regard; I have nevertheleſs one ſhort queſtion to aſk you: Why are not you in mourning? How comes it that I ſee you dreſſed in a robe of embroidered brocade?

The anſwer was quickly ready: I went, ſaid ſhe, to open the coffin with a ſecret preſage of my happineſs; the joy that overwhelmed me did not require a gloomy dreſs; nor would it have been proper to receive you, full of life, in a habit of mourning: this made me put on my wedding-cloaths.

Very well, ſaid Chuang-tſe, let us paſs over that article. Why was my

my coffin placed in that old ruined building, and not in the hall, where it ought to have been? This queſtion diſconcerted the lady, and ſhe could not anſwer it.

Chuang-tſe, caſting his eyes upon the diſhes and cups, and all the other inſtruments of feſtivity, conſidered them attentively; and without diſcovering his thoughts, ordered ſome warm wine to be brought him: he ſwallowed ſeveral cups without ſaying a word; while the lady remained in great confuſion. After which he took paper and pencil, and wrote the following verſes:

" Faithleſs ſpouſe! is this the re-
" turn you make for my tender-
" neſs? Should I conſent to live
" with you, as a good huſband

" ought to do with his wife, might
" not I fear that you would
" come a ſecond time to cleave
" my coffin with the blows of a
" hatchet ?"

The good matron having read the verſes, changed colour, and was ſo confounded ſhe durſt not open her mouth. Chuang-tſe reſumed his pencil, and wrote four verſes more.

" What have I gained by ſo
" many proofs of the moſt tender
" regard ?--A ſtranger no ſooner ap-
" pears, but I am inſtantly forgot-
" ten. They came to attack me
" in the coffin with great blows of
" a hatchet. This is a much more
" intemperate haſte, than that of
" drying up the tomb with a fan."

After

After this Chuang-tſe ſaid to the lady, Look at thoſe two men that are behind you, pointing to them with his finger. She turned her head and perceived Wang-tſun and his old ſervant entering the houſe. This was a new cauſe of alarm for her. Looking behind her a ſecond time, ſhe found they had diſappeared.

In fine, this unhappy woman, overwhelmed with deſpair at the diſcovery of her intrigue, and unable to ſurvive the ſhame of it, withdrew into a retired corner, and untying her ſilk girdle, hanged herſelf upon a beam. A deplorable end, to which a ſhameful paſſion commonly conducts thoſe who yield themſelves up to it. As for her, ſhe was really

dead without any hopes of returning to life.

Chuang-tſe, having found her in this poſture, cut her down, and patching up the broken coffin, without farther ceremony laid her in it. Then having a while diverted himſelf, by ſinging her funeral dirge in a burleſque manner to the ſound of the diſhes, pots, and other utenſils, which had ſerved for the marriage-feaſt, he burſt into loud fits of laughter, and broke them all to pieces.

This done he ſet fire to the houſe, which being covered only with ſtubble, was in a ſhort time reduced to aſhes; and this was the funeral pile of the unhappy Tien, who was entirely conſumed. Nothing was

ſaved

ſaved from the fire but the books of Tao-te, which the neighbours ſnatched up and preſerved from the flames.

After this Chuang-tſe, firmly reſolved never to marry again, ſet out on his travels; in the courſe of which, meeting with his maſter Laotſe, he ſpent the reſt of his life, very agreeably in his company.

The Chineſe author concludes the hiſtory with four verſes to the following effect:

" The celebrated OU, in a tranſ-
" port of jealouſy, killed his wife--.
" This was brutality.

" The illuſtrious SIUN almoſt
" died of grief when he loſt his
" wife.—This was folly.

The

" The philoſopher CHUANG,
" who diverted himſelf by ſinging
" to the ſound of the pots and glaſ-
" ſes, and choſe for his portion,
" liberty and joy—
" He ſhall be my maſter, ſhould
" ever ſuch an accident happen to
" me."

THE

THE

FRENCH MATRON.

By Sir G. ETHEREGE.

THE

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE

FRENCH MATRON.

From a Letter of Sir G. ETHEREGE to the Duke of BUCKINGHAM..

RATISBON, Oct. 2. 1689.

My LORD,

I NEVER enjoy myſelf ſo much, as when I can ſteal a few moments from the hurry of public buſineſs, to write to my friends in England; and as there is none to whom

whom I pay a profounder reſpect than to your grace, wonder not if I afford myſelf the ſatisfaction of converſing with you by way of letters (the only relief I have left me to ſupport your abſence at this diſtance) as often as I can find an opportunity.

You may gueſs by my laſt, whether I do not paſs my time very comfortably here; forced as I am by my character to ſpend the better part of my time in ſquabbling and deliberating with perſons of beard and gravity, how to preſerve the balance of Chriſtendom, which would go well enough of itſelf, if the divines and miniſters of princes would let it alone: And when I come home, ſpent and weary from the Diet, I

have no Lord Dorſets, or Sir Charles Sedleys to ſport away the evening with; no Madam J——, or my Lady A——'s; in ſhort, none of thoſe kind charming creatures London affords, in whoſe company I might make myſelf amends for ſo many hours murdered in impertinent debates; ſo that not to magnify my ſufferings to your grace, they really want a greater ſtock of Chriſtian patience to ſupport them, than I can pretend to be maſter of.

I have been long enough in this town (one would think) to have made ſufficient acquaintance with perſons of both ſexes, ſo as never to be at a loſs how to paſs the few vacant hours I can allow myſelf: But the terrible drinking that accompanies

companies all our viſits, hinders me from converſing with the men ſo often as I would otherwiſe do; and the German ladies are ſo intolerably reſerved and virtuous (with tears in my eyes I ſpeak it to your grace) it is next to an impoſſibility to carry on an intrigue with them. A man hath ſo many ſcruples to conquer, and ſo many difficulties to ſurmount, before he can promiſe himſelf the leaſt ſucceſs, that for my part I have given over all purſuits of this nature. Beſides, there is ſo univerſal a ſpirit of cenſoriouſneſs reigns in this town, that a man and woman cannot be ſeen at ombre or piquet together, but it is immediately concluded ſome other game hath been played between them; and as this renders all manner

ner of acceſs to the ladies almoſt impracticable, for fear of expoſing their reputation to the mercy of their ill-natured neighbours, ſo it makes an innocent piece of gallantry oſten paſs for a criminal correſpondence.

So that to deal freely with your grace, among ſo many noble and wealthy families as we have in this town, I can only pretend to be truly acquainted with one: The gentleman's name was Monſieur Hoffman, a frank, hearty, jolly companion; his father, one of the moſt eminent wine-merchants of the city, left him a conſiderable fortune, which he improved by marrying a French jeweller's daughter of Lyons. To give you his character in ſhort, he

was

was a ſenſible ingenious man, and had none of his country vices, which I impute to his having travelled abroad, and ſeen Italy, France, and England. His lady is a moſt accompliſhed perſon, and notwithſtanding ſhe is come into a place where ſo much formality and ſtiffneſs are practiſed, keeps up all the vivacity and air and good humour of France.

I had been happy in my acquaintance with this family for ſome months, when an ill-favoured accident robbed me of the greateſt happineſs I had hitherto enjoyed in Germany, the loſs of which I can never ſufficiently regret. Monſieur Hoffman, about three weeks ago, going to make merry with ſome friends,

friends, (at a village three leagues from this place) upon the Danube, by the unſkilfulneſs or negligence of the waterman, the boat wherein he was, unfortunately overſet, and of twenty perſons not one eſcaped to bring home the news, but a boy that miraculouſly ſaved himſelf by holding faſt to the rudder, and ſo by the rapidity of the current was caſt upon the other ſhore.

I was ſenſibly afflicted at the deſtiny of my worthy friend, and ſo indeed were all that had the honour of knowing him; but his wife took on ſo extravagantly, that ſhe, in a ſhort time, was the only talk both of city and country; ſhe refuſed to admit any viſits from her neareſt re-

lations: her chamber, her anti-chamber, and pro-anti-chamber were hung with black; nay, the very candles, her fans, and tea-table wore the livery of grief. She refuſed all manner of ſuſtenance, and was ſo averſe to the thoughts of living, that ſhe talked of nothing but death. In ſhort, you may tell your ingenious friend Monſieur De Saint Evremont, that Petronius's Epheſian Matron, to whoſe ſtory he has done ſo much juſtice in his noble tranſlation, was only a type of our more obſtinate, as well as more unhappy FRENCH WIDOW.

About a fortnight after this cruel loſs (for I thought it would be labour loſt to attack her grief in its firſt vehemence) I thought myſelf obliged,

obliged, in point of honour and gratitude to the memory of my deceaſed friend, to make her a ſmall viſit, and to condole her ladyſhip on this unhappy occaſion: And though I had been told that ſhe had refuſed to ſee ſeveral perſons, who had gone to wait on her with the ſame errand, yet I preſumed ſo much upon the friendſhip her late huſband had always expreſſed for me, not to mention the particular civilities I had received from herſelf, as to think I ſhould be admitted to have a ſight of her. Accordingly I went to her houſe, ſent up my name, and word was immediately brought me that, if I pleaſed, I might go up to her.

When I came into the room I fancied myſelf in the territories of

death, every thing looked ſo gloomy, ſo diſmal, and ſo melancholy. There was a grave Lutheran miniſter with her, that omitted no arguments to bring her to a more compoſed and more chriſtian diſpoſition of mind. Madam, ſays he, you do not conſider that by abandoning yourſelf thus to deſpair, you actually rebel againſt Providence, which is downright impiety. What would you ſay now, if heaven ſhould puniſh it by ſome more exemplary viſitation? That is impoſſible, replies the lady ſighing; and ſince it hath robbed me of the only delight I had in this world, the only favour it can do me, is to level a thunderbolt at my head and put an end to all my ſufferings. The parſon finding her in this extravagant

travagant ſtrain, and ſeeing no likelihood of perſuading her to come to a better temper, got up from his ſeat and took his leave of her.

It came to my turn now to try whether I was not capable of comforting her; and being convinced, by ſo late an inſtance, that arguments brought from religion were not likely to work any extraordinary effects upon her, I reſolved to attack her ladyſhip in a more ſenſible part, and to repreſent to her the great inconveniencies (not which her ſoul, but) her body received from this inordinate ſorrow.

Madam, ſays I to her, next to my concern for your worthy huſband's untimely death, I am grieved to ſee what an alteration the bemoaning

of his loſs hath occaſioned in you. Theſe words raiſing her curioſity to know what this alteration was, I thus continued my diſcourſe: In endeavouring, madam, to extinguiſh or at leaſt to alleviate your grief, than which nothing can be more prejudicial to a beautiful woman, I intend a public benefit; for if the public is intereſted, as moſt certainly it is, in the preſerving of a beautiful face, that man does the public no little ſervice, who contributes moſt to its preſervation.

This odd beginning operated ſo wonderfully upon her, that ſhe deſired me to leave this general road of compliments, and explain myſelf more particularly to her. Upon this (delivering myſelf with an unuſual

uſual air of gravity, which your grace knows I ſeldom carry about me in the company of ladies) I told her, that grief ruins the fineſt faces ſooner than any thing whatever; and that as envy itſelf could not deny her face to be the moſt charming in the univerſe, ſo if ſhe did not ſuffer herſelf to be comforted, ſhe muſt ſoon expect to take her farewell of it. I confirmed this aſſertion, by telling her of one of the fineſt women we ever had in England, who did herſelf more injury in a fortnight's time by lamenting her only brother's death, than ten years could poſſibly have done; that I had heard an eminent Phyſician at Leyden ſay, that tears, having abundance of ſaline particles

in them, not only ſpoiled the complexion but haſtened wrinkles. But, Madam, concluded I, why ſhould I give myſelf the trouble to confirm this by foreign inſtances, and by the teſtimonies of our moſt knowing doctors, when, alas! your own face ſo fully juſtifies the truth of what I have ſaid to you?

How! replied our diſconſolate widow with a ſigh that came from the bottom of her heart; and is it poſſible that my juſt concern for my dear huſband hath wrought ſo cruel an effect upon me in ſuch a ſhort time! With that ſhe ordered her gentlewoman to bring the looking-glaſs to her; and having ſurveyed herſelf a few minutes in it, ſhe told me ſhe was perfectly convinced that my notions

notions were true. But, cries ſhe, what would you have us poor women do in theſe caſes? For ſomething, continues ſhe, we owe to the memory of the deceaſed, and ſomething to the world, which expects at leaſt the common appearance of grief from us.

By your leave, Madam, ſays I, all this is a miſtake, and no better: you owe nothing to your huſband, ſince he is dead and knows nothing of your lamentation; beſides, could you ſhed an ocean of tears upon his hearſe, it would not do him the leaſt ſervice; much leſs do you lie under any ſuch obligation to the world, as to ſpoil a good face only to comply with its tyrannic cuſtoms. No, Madam, take care to preſerve your

your beauty, and then let the world ſay what it pleaſes, your ladyſhip may be revenged on the world whenever you ſee fit. I am reſolved, anſwers ſhe, to be intirely governed by you; therefore tell me frankly what ſort of courſe you would have me ſteer. Why, Madam, ſays I, in the firſt place forget the defunct; and in order to bring that about, relieve nature, to which you have been ſo long unmerciful, with the moſt exquiſite meats and the moſt generous wines. Upon condition you will ſup with me, cries our afflicted lady, I will ſubmit to your preſcription.

But why ſhould I trouble your grace with a narration of every particular? In ſhort, we had a noble

regale

regale that evening in her bed-chamber, and our good widow puſhed the glaſs ſo ſtrenuouſly about, that her comforter (meaning myſelf) could hardly find the way to his coach.

To conclude this farce, which I am afraid now begins to be tedious to your grace, this phœnix of her ſex, this pattern of conjugal fidelity, two mornings ago was married to a ſmooth-chin'd enſign of count Trautmandorf's regiment, that had not a farthing in the world but his pay to depend upon. I aſſiſted at the ceremony, though I little imagined the lady would ſo ſoon have taken the matrimonial receipt.

I was

I was the eaſier perſuaded to give your grace a large account of this tragi-comedy, not only becauſe I wanted a better ſubject to entertain you with at this lazy conjuncture, but alſo to ſhew your grace, that not only Epheſus in ancient, and England in latter times, have afforded ſuch fantaſtical widows, but even Germany itſelf; where if the ladies have not more virtue than thoſe of their ſex in other countries, yet they pretend at leaſt a greater management of the outſide of it.

* * * * * * * * * *

I am, my LORD, &c.

THE

THE

BRITISH MATRON.

By * * * *

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE BRITISH MATRON.

From a Narrative, intitled,

THE WIDOW OF THE WOOD, 1755, 12mo.

INTRODUCTION.

IF the following tale ſhould not be told ſo agreeably, as ſome of the others, at leaſt it is more ſtrictly founded on truth. The narrative from which it is extracted, is ſupported by authentic

affidavits, and ſeems to have been drawn up by the perſon who is mentioned in the following pages under the name of VELIN. Although we have borrowed our materials from this gentleman, and generally given them in his own words, we have ventured to arrange them in a different manner: we have omitted many of the minuter circumſtances; and inſtead of initial letters uſed by him, have choſen to give names intirely fictitious. A piece of decency, which we think due to the families and connection of the parties, who are perſons of diſtinguiſhed rank and probity.

The

The HISTORY.

GENTLE reader, if thou haſt ever travelled on the London road between * * * * and Cheſter, thou may'ſt poſſibly have obſerved a handſome new-built manſion, which we ſhall call from its poſſeſſor Wiley-houſe. This was lately inhabited by a beautiful young widow, whoſe remarkable adventures and enterpriſing genius have recommended her to a place in this ſmall group of heroines, and

might juſtly have intitled her to ſtand foremoſt on the liſt.

This lady was deſcended from a very worthy family of diſtinction in this iſland: ſhe was of a middle ſtature; genteely formed; her complexion fair; her face oval; her hair of the true Engliſh colour, a pale brown; her eyes blue, large, languiſhing, and full of love.

Thus agreeable in her perſon, with the charming addition of twelve thouſand pounds to her fortune, ſhe had crouds of admirers; but the happy and favoured ſwain was John Wiley, Eſq; at that time a ſtudent in the Temple, who in her twentieth year carried her off, and married her privately without the conſent of her relations.

We

We ſhall not detain the reader with the connubial hiſtory of this happy pair. Let it ſuffice that he proved a man of honour, and made her a handſome ſettlement after marriage; which ſhe returned by a ſtill more valuable preſent of two fine boys. After living ſix years together (for ought we know) very happily, an epidemical ſmall-pox ſnatched away this young huſband, and left her a diſconſolate widow.

Nothing happened uncommon during the firſt year of mourning; ſhe went ſo many months dreſſed in black, and ſo many months cloathed in gray; and behaved in her weeds with great reſerve and decorum. She upon all occaſions profeſſed a proper averſion for the faſhi-

onable gaieties of the age; declared her intention of devoting her life to privacy and retirement; and put London to defiance with all its pomps and allurements.

Sentiments ſo juſt and ſo uncommon could not but meet with general approbation; and ſeemed the more remarkable, as ſhe was ſtill but in her eight-and-twentieth year, and ſtill qualified to ſhine amidſt the young and the gay.

Among the viſiting gentry, whoſe chariots ſometimes drove up to her gate, was John Rover, Eſq; a young gentleman of fortune, and member of parliament for the neighbouring borough. He was a ſingle man, of good character, agreeable in his perſon, and lively in his converſation:

in

in ſhort, equally deſirable as a companion for life, or for half an hour. In which of theſe views he was moſt conſidered by the lady we ſhall not decide; but his viſits were obſerved to grow more frequent in their return, and longer in their continuance, than thoſe of any other of her neighbours. This did not however cauſe any great ſpeculation; much leſs could it occaſion cenſure: The gentleman was of decent character; and the lady's reputation for reſerve, and prudence, was thoroughly eſtabliſhed.

How any thing wrong could poſſibly happen between ſo well-behaved a man and ſo diſcreet a lady, we leave to the more diſcerning: matter of fact is our province, and we can

only relate, that after a few months the gentleman diſcontinued his viſits, and the lady found herſelf pregnant.

Here, Ladies, was rather a diſagreeable ſituation: a proſpect of diſgrace and miſery, under the terrors of which many a gentle ſoul would have ſunk: but our matron was luckily of another make, and the difficulties that threatened her, called forth powers, which few human minds appear poſſeſſed of. She wiſely conſidered that a child born without a father, would make but a ſorry figure in the world, and therefore reſolved to procure him as good a one as ſhe could. She had little hope of reclaiming the real father, and it behoved her to look out early for another. Let us obſerve how notably

notably ſhe managed upon this occaſion, and without peeping behind the curtain, let us now ſee how ſhe acted in public, before the eye of the world.

About half a mile from Wiley-houſe ſtands a venerable old hall, the ſeat of Sir William Worthy, Bart. This gentleman was about ſixty years of age, but in vigour and ſpirits exceeded many a battered rake of five-and-thirty. He had lately buried his wife in London, and was come down into the country, that change of place and a new ſet of viſitants might contribute to divert his melancholy, and enable him to bear a loſs, which he could not retrieve.

Soon

Soon after his arrival at Worthy-hall, his two ſons coming home from ſchool, Mrs. Wiley ſent her own little boys to pay them a viſit. As theſe two families had not had the leaſt intercourſe for many years, and were not even on viſiting terms, this unexpected advance ſurprized the baronet: but his ſurprize was not a little increaſed by a meſſage, that ſoon followed, to invite the young gentlemen to return the viſit: This was complied with. And to ſhew the lady's growing regard, ſhe ſent a ſervant the ſame evening to deſire leave to detain them to ſupper.

Not long after this incident, Sir William's brother, an Iriſh baronet, came with his lady to ſpend a few

days

days at his houſe. An hour after their arrival a meſſage came from Mrs. Wiley to inquire how her ladyſhip did after her journey; and to let her know ſhe would have the pleaſure of paying her reſpects to her on the morrow. Accordingly at the viſiting hour ſhe came, and behaved like an accompliſhed ſprightly woman. When ſhe was withdrawn, lady Worthy aſked her brother, who this agreeable unexpected viſitant was? She is my near neighbour, ſaid he, a young widow: and this is the firſt time ſhe has favoured this houſe with a viſit for many years, which to be ſure is on your ladyſhip's account. Is it ſo? replied ſhe ſmiling: come, come Sir William, if I have any penetration,

tion, you are the occaſion of theſe civilities.

Soon after his brother's departure Sir William received a viſit from a very intimate friend, whom we ſhall call Mr. Velin. This gentleman came to Worthy-hall about the beginning of July 1752. Sir William entertained him with the above paſſages of our young matron, and her health was conſtantly drank at his table.

As ſunday-evening is an eſtabliſhed viſiting time in the country, it ſoon came in turn to aſſemble at the widow's. Sir William propoſed to his friend their going thither, and the chariot was ordered out accordingly. After the uſual time ſpent among a ſet of formal faces,

the

the viſiting ladies retired. The two gentlemen being thus left alone with the widow, after anh our's lively chat, roſe in their turn to take their leaves; when ſhe thus addreſſed herſelf to the baronet: "If you and your friend will ſtay and partake of a ſlight cold ſupper, I ſhall be glad of your company. You know I am lonely and it will be charity." As we readily conſent to what is agreeable, the lady's requeſt was ſoon granted, and the evening paſſed away very pleaſantly.

A day or two after, Mr. Velin went to viſit his old acquaintance the Rev. Mr. Coupler the curate of the pariſh. With this gentleman and his ſpouſe (who were ever acceptable

ceptable gueſts at Worthy-hall) our blooming widow had lately commenced a moſt violent friendſhip. Seldom paſt a day but her chariot carried her to the parſonage, or fetched them to Wiley-houſe. During the above viſit the doctor aſked Mr. Velin, if his friend Sir William had any thoughts of marrying again? I think he has, replied the other, if he could meet with an agreeable woman ſuitable to his age and fortune. There is a lady, ſaid Mr. Coupler, of a ſuitable fortune whom I am ſure he may have, if you don't think her too young; and this you may tell Sir William from me. At the ſame time he named Mrs. Wiley.

Mr.

Mr. Velin at his return informed his friend of their converſation; who confeſſed that ſeveral perſons in the neighbourhood had given him the ſame hints, and ſeemed as if they ſpoke from certainty.

Subſequent converſations, and a viſit or two more to Wiley-houſe, led the baronet at laſt to conclude that he ſhould be liable to reproach, if he did not put the neceſſary queſtion to the expecting widow. The only objection was their diſparity of age: but to this it was anſwered, that ſhe was a lady of unqueſtionable virtue; and though ſo young, of an uncommon caſt of mind: that ſhe had intirely devoted herſelf to a rural life, and that, with all theſe conſiderations, vigorous

hale

hale threeſcore might ſtand no bad chance with cool flegmatic twenty-eight.

Theſe difficulties ſurmounted, the wiſhed-for queſtion was put to the lady. The reader will eaſily conceive the joyful reply of the enraptured lover, when ſhe conveyed her conſent under the following agreeable objection— "Indeed, Sir William, I "think you may make a more de-"ſirable choice."

Thus far every thing has ſucceeded to the widow; we have ſeen with what dexterity ſhe conducted her ſcheme, and might conclude her wiſhes would terminate with its ſucceſs. To become lady Worthy and a reputable mother would have ſatisfied a woman of common genius,

nius, but our matron had more enlarged views. What they were we ſhall gradually diſcover.

The enſuing evening at the hour of eight Sir William repaired to his yielding widow. At this interview ſhe not only conſented to a SPEEDY wedding, but alſo inſiſted on its being performed with the utmoſt SECRECY.

When this was related to Mr. Velin, he was greatly alarmed at the thoughts of a SUDDEN and SECRET marriage; and therefore intreated his friend to obtain, leave for him to viſit his miſtreſs, in order to diſcuſs that important queſtion. Sir William complied, and an interview was appointed.

When Mr. Velin was admitted to the lady, he expreſſed how ſenſible he was of the honour done him in being permitted to adviſe her on the affair in queſtion; but acknowledged himſelf greatly ſurprized at the account brought him by his friend, that ſhe inſiſted on a ſpeedy and ſecret wedding: as they were both perſons of happy independent fortunes, it would be a kind of diſgrace to enter into ſo important an alliance as it were by STEALTH. Let me prevail on you, Madam, continued he, to alter your deſign, and let me have the happineſs of ſeeing your marriage ſolemnized, as it ought to be, publicly in the face of the world.

At

At this rational and cloſe attack the lady ſeemed not a little confuſed—but recovering herſelf, ſhe urged in her defence, that to make the marriage public would bring all her relations upon her, and particularly her brother, whoſe violent temper ſhe had reaſon to dread. On this Mr. Velin aſked how her brother was likely to behave when the marriage ſhould be known. She replied ſmiling, " Why—" he won't be able to diſſolve it: " Will he?" This remark, ſo agreeably conveyed, implied ſuch an eager deſire in the lady to have the marriage ſecure, that this advocate no longer inſiſted on the point; at the ſame time he begged leave to mention another; that it

was neceſſary ſhe ſhould ſign a deed of releaſe, to renounce all claim of power on Sir William's eſtate, in caſe ſhe ſhould ſurvive him. He obſerved to her that ſhe was poſſeſſed of many hundred pounds a year for her life, which at her death would revert to Mr. Wiley's ſons; that Sir William had ſeveral children already, and was likely to have a new race, which muſt all be provided for out of his eſtate; and that therefore it was for her honour to ſign ſo neceſſary a deed before the marriage.

To this ſhe replied, You talk like a good friend of Sir William's; but if I had a proper advocate preſent, I doubt not but you would hear ſome powerful arguments urged in my

my favour. But, Sir, I aſſure you, it is not my deſign to do the leaſt injury to Sir William's family, and I will perform every thing needful to prove it.

Here followed ſome fine compliments on the lady's diſtinguiſhed underſtanding. Then Mr. Velin told her he had only to add the moſt pleaſing circumſtance of all —the fixing the day of marriage, and to conſider how it could be beſt effected upon her own plan: At the ſame time he recommended the Tueſday following, viz. the 25th day of Auguſt, being the firſt day of * * * * * races; which, he obſerved, would attract all the neighbours of condition, and draw off all the idle people. This

motion pleaſed the lady extremely. Mr. Coupler, added ſhe, muſt ſend all his family to the races, and I will ſend my own man thither to prevent his making diſcoveries. And indeed ſhe confirmed her fear of her ſervants by her extraordinary behaviour: for though they ſat alone in a large parlour, and the doors were ſhut, ſhe not only deſired Mr. Velin to lower his voice, but roſe very often ſoftly to open the door that led to the back ſtairs, to ſee if any one liſtened, and ſaid, She knew the curioſity of ſervants.

Mr. Velin at that time made no remarks on this circumſtance, but having ſettled the preliminaries, imparted them to his friend the next morning. Sir William ſent immediately

ately for Mr. Coupler, and let him into the ſecret. The good-natured divine, being a ſincere well-wiſher to both parties, very chearfully promiſed his beſt aſſiſtance. The ſame evening Sir William, his friend, and the lady met at the parſonage, and after tea and cards, when they were left alone, the doctor was deſired to produce the licence, which was immediately filled up in the preſence of the lady.

Nothing now remained, but for her to ſign the deed before-mentioned: this was prepared the next day, and Mr. Velin intended to wait on her with it. But his intentions coming to the lady's ears, ſhe diſpatched the doctor, to deſire Sir Wiliam would come to her that

evening without his friend. The latter ſmiled, and taking the paper out of his pocket, ſaid, I underſtand the widow's meaning; ſhe thinks ſhe can deal with you better than me. Here, Sir, take the paper; and promiſe me now before this gentleman, that you will never marry her till ſhe has ſigned it.——Sir William gave his ſolemn promiſe, and the ſame evening waited on the lady. She peruſed the paper with great diſlike: ſhe promiſed to think of it, but did not chooſe to ſign the deed.

When Sir William informed his friend of her behaviour, they gave up all thoughts of celebrating the wedding on the day appointed.

When

When that day came, theſe gentlemen were amuſed in their morning and evening walks by ſeeing the widow wheeling round all ſides of Worthy-hall in her coach alone; and going twice or thrice the ſame day to her good friends at the parſonage.

And here we muſt make a ſhort digreſſion.—We have before mentioned our matron's ſuſpicious conduct with regard to her ſervants. She had in particular a footman, who was obſerved of late to treat his miſtreſs with remarkable diſreſpect, and ſhewed by his behaviour that he was poſſeſſed of ſome dangerous ſecret. Once on a meſſage to Sir William's houſe, he had declared among the ſervants that it was in his

his power to bring his lady upon her knees, and had dropped other ſpeeches of the like ſcandalous import. The ſervants, ſhocked at theſe ſtrange expreſſions ſo injurious to the character of a lady whom their maſter reſpected, agreed to report them to their maſter's friend. This gentleman rightly judged that it would not be proper Sir William ſhould marry a lady, who had been traduced by her own ſervant before perſons who were ſoon to owe her duty as a miſtreſs. He therefore laid the affair before Sir William and the doctor; who both agreed that it was paying but due reſpect to the lady to make her ſervant eat his words, or lay him open to her juſt reſentment. Accordingly

ingly he was ſent for to Worthy-hall, and in the preſence of the gentlemen confronted with his accuſers: when he thought proper to ſign a recantation and acknowledge himſelf a liar and a raſcal.

This happened early on Wedneſday morning, the day after that which had been fixed for the wedding. The ſame day happened a very remarkable incident, of ſo much importance to the matron's ſchemes, that we ſhall relate it with the moſt circumſtantial minuteneſs.

Her great fondneſs for her two very good friends, Mr. and Mrs. Coupler, led her that morning alone to make them a viſit; when ſhe bitterly lamented her ill health, or rather her diſcontented mind. The

good-natured Mrs. Coupler behaved like a true motherly woman on the occaſion; and as eating and drinking are commonly preſcribed, recommended chocolate and a glaſs of Madeira. She needed little perſuaſion to partake of both, but yet, fine-lady-like, ſtill complained; and though her bed-chamber was the fitteſt place for ſuch complaints, diſcovered little inclination of returning home. In ſhort, ſhe was eaſily prevailed on to ſend for her cloaths, and dreſs where ſhe was, and ſo ſpend the day there. This was done with the hope that Sir William would accidentally ſtep in: however that it might not be left to chance, it was propoſed he ſhould be ſent for. He came accordingly in the evening,

evening, and the lady received him with complaints of her health, and of the treatment her ſervant had met with in the morning. Theſe complainings, which were not a little vehement, threw her into the moſt violent hyſteric fit ever ſeen. This no doubt ſurprized the company, and all the uſual noſtrums were applied. While ſhe continued in this fit, extended on a couch, ſupported by Sir William, her head reclining on his breaſt, ſhe frequently cried out, "Why don't you ſend for Sir William?—Tell him I love him dearly!——I won't injure his children!——That VELIN has undone me!——Oh! where is Sir William?"

The

The fit went off, as is uſual in ſuch caſes, with a ſhower of tears. When the lady was recovered, the baronet expreſſed his deſire to complete her happineſs with his own, but obſerved to her that the delay was intirely of her own making.

When Sir William at night acquainted his friend with this ſurprizing adventure, he expreſſed no ſmall diſlike at the lady's myſterious conduct; but gave it as his opinion that ſhe would certainly ſign the deed and marry him.

Mr. Velin's departure being fixed for the Saturday following*, he drew up a letter to be delivered to the lady after he was gone; wherein

*Auguſt 29.

he

he remonſtrated to her in very plain, but reſpectful terms, the unreaſonableneſs of her conduct.

" I had promiſed myſelf the " pleaſure," ſaid he, " of leaving " you in an alliance that offered a " proſpect of ſincere happineſs to " two worthy independent per- " ſons.

" My friend's conduct in this af- " fair has been uniform and affec- " tionate :——Your objections fill " me with wonder and ſurprize.

" I heartily wiſh I may never " meet with a more difficult taſk, " than that of convincing any rati- " onal friend of yours, that it is " for your own honour and felicity " to ſign the deed in queſtion.

" It

" It is obvious, that Sir Wil-
" liam's relations cannot poſſi-
" bly viſit you on any other terms:
" nor can you receive the congra-
" tulations of the common friends
" of both families with a good
" grace, while you have it in
" your power to injure Sir Wil-
" liam's children in ſo ſevere and
" unjuſt a manner: and my friend
" muſt be deemed a weak or
" worthleſs man to conſent to it.

" How amiable muſt you appear
" in an alliance founded on mutual
" affection? As you have both in-
" dependent fortunes, why ſhould
" that beſt cement of your happi-
" neſs be deſtroyed by any venal
" ſordid views?"

He concluded with a compliment to the lady's good ſenſe, as "what he "did not doubt would direct her "to think and act properly in "this affair;" and then very reſpectfully bade her adieu.

At the ſame time that he left this letter with a ſervant to be carried as directed, he gave a copy of it ſealed up to Sir William, with a requeſt that it might not be read till he was gone. The reader will perceive that this gentleman thought he left his friend in ſome danger, and therefore as the parting ſtroke delivered his ſentiments in the above plain and powerful manner.

The ſame evening Sir William received the following billet from Wiley-houſe.

" SIR,

" I am obliged to go out this af-
" ternoon, but ſhall return home
" between ſeven and eight o'clock;
" if you are not engaged at that
" time I ſhall be extremely glad to
" ſee you. I was this morning
" favoured with a letter from Mr.
" Velin; I am ſorry he ſhould judge
" ſo hardly of one who in ſpite
" of him and all the world will
" ever be a ſincere well-wiſher to
" yourſelf and family.

" I am, Sir,

" Your moſt obliged

" humble Servant,

" A. WILEY."

Sir

Sir William paid the requeſted viſit, which was trifled away in ceremonious obliging ſpeeches; for as the matron imagined that ſame cruel obſtacle the DEED was a ſtroke of Mr. Velin's, ſhe hoped, now that miſchievous adviſer was removed, that a few days employed in bewitching ſmiles, ſoft tender ſpeeches, with now-and-then a melting kiſs, would prevail with her lover to grant her better terms. In this ſcheme ſhe engaged her very ſincere flexible friend the Rev. Mr. Coupler; who out of reſpect to her late huſband laboured to get the beſt terms he could for his widow. He accordingly took the firſt opportunity of applying to the baronet before

the lady, and much better terms he obtained for her. For though Sir William inflexibly perſiſted that the aforeſaid DEED ſhould be ſigned before marriage, yet ſhe prevailed on him to ſign another deed in her favour, drawn up by the doctor and dictated by herſelf.

In theſe ſucceſsful negotiations ten or twelve days were employed, which brought on September 21ſt, N. S. and introduced a new perſon in the ſcene, which was Captain Worthy, a nephew of Sir William's, who came from his regiment to pay a ſhort viſit to his uncle. The very evening of his arrival he was introduced to the lady at her conſtant viſiting-houſe the parſonage; where he was ſoon informed by

by the eyes of the parties, and the behaviour of the company, that a wedding was near.

Accordingly on the 23d of Sept. as they were going to ſpend the afternoon at the widow's, they were ſurprized by the appearance of Mr. Coupler; who came to tell them that Mrs. Wiley had dined that day at his houſe and intended there to ſpend the evening; that ſhe deſired to ſee him and his nephew, and had made ſome whimſical ſigns that pointed towards an immediate marriage.

The gentlemen could not refuſe ſo fair a challenge, and therefore went to the parſonage without delay. The good woman of the manſion had received her cue, and

preſently gave the word for promoting matrimony: no doubt the remembrance of her own happy time animated her not a little, for ſhe was remarkably notable on the occaſion. Sir William behaved on this ſudden attack like a veteran ſoldier, and ſoon as he was informed of the lady's deſire to be married that evening, was ready to anſwer in the words of ROWE,

Thou haſt ta'en me ſomewhat unawares, 'tis true,
But love and war take turns like day and night,
And little preparation ſerves my turn;
Equal to both, and armed for either field.

In plain honeſt proſe, he applied to their friend the parſon to marry them inſtantly, and gave his honour to indemnify him for neg-

neglecting to obſerve canonical hours: both of them promiſing at the ſame time to be re-married ſoon after in public.

This application the good-natured doctor could not withſtand: he accordingly ſet about the neceſſary apparatus. Capt. Worthy was appointed to give the lady away, and the before-mentioned articles of marriage were carried to the church, which the parties entered at ſeparate doors; and there, after both the DEEDS were ſigned and properly witneſſed, the MARRIAGE WAS CELEBRATED in all its forms.

Thus far our matron's ſchemes have proved ſucceſsful: behold her ſafe landed in the harbour of ma-

trimony; behold her dignified with the title of Lady. She has alſo procured better terms for herſelf than ſhe could equitably expect; though her ſtickling for them ſo long has expoſed her to the danger of invoking LUCINA before the due period; but this affords her little diſquiet; a head ſo fruitful of expedients need not fear to find a ſalvo for that ſlight inconvenience.

What can ſhe have to deſire more?—That ſhe has yet farther views the reader of diſcernment will conclude from many circumſtances of her myſterious conduct; but eſpecially from her labouring to have the marriage celebrated in ſo clandeſtine a manner, and at ſo ſuſpicious an hour.—Not to keep the

the reader in ſuſpence, we ſhall let him into the ſecret.

Be it known then, that our matron wiſely conſidered that two ſtrings to her bow were better than one; that a young lover was preferable to an old one; and though ſhe had ſecured a good huſband in caſe of the worſt, that it would be yet moſt deſirable to be the wife of her old friend Mr. Rover, provided he ſhould hereafter relent; and therefore ſhe reſolved to preſerve herſelf ſtill in a ſtate of capability of being his bride.

With this view, as ſoon as they had ſtolen with all poſſible privacy back to the parſonage, ſhe began to renew her fears of a diſcovery, and again enjoined the company to be

ſe-

ſecret. But her ſuſpicion was particularly levelled againſt poor Coupler; and not content with his ſolemn promiſe, was ſo unmannerly as to inſiſt on his bible-oath. This, to ſhew her influence over him, and how much he was devoted to her ſervice, he complied with. The good lady's grateful returns we ſhall be acquainted with very ſoon.

At the hour of departure ſhe carried the bridegroom and the captain part of their way home in her coach. Nor did the former quit her without obſerving, how unuſual it was for a bride and bridegroom to ſeparate on the wedding-night.

The

The next morning it was generally reported all over the neighbourhood that Sir William and the young widow had been married the evening before. Two or three neighbours, who ſaw the parties about the church-yard, had had the confidence to pry into the ſecret. On this general rumour, which was propagated alſo by her own ſervants, ſeveral perſons were ſent by the bride, directly to examine poor Coupler on the truth of the report, and to puſh him on to a declaration,——becauſe ſhe knew ſhe had fettered him to ſilence, and that his denials and evaſions before ſo many witneſſes would all ſerve the concerted plan, if ſhe ſhould ever find cauſe to put it in execution.

What

What a Machiavel in petticoats! to be married in private! few perſons preſent! to ſwear them to ſecrecy! to propagate the report! to ſend perſons of ſome note to the parties to inquire into the truth of it! that they might make oath when called upon, that Sir William and Mr. Coupler both denied a marriage on the 23d of Sept. This was a maſter-ſtroke in politics, and we ſhall ſoon find the great uſe ſhe made of it.

Nothing material happened till the 27th inſtant; the interval being employed in mutual viſitings and endearments: when the lady intreated Sir William to go ſomewhere on a viſit for a few days from home, to remove all ſuſpicion of their marriage: to which he like an obliging

huſband conſented. At taking his leave that night the lady burſt into tears, and leaning her head on his neck continued weeping for ſome time. Sir William imagined her concern aroſe from the thoughts of their parting, and therefore told her with great ſimplicity, He had no buſineſs from home. To which ſhe replied, You muſt go; I'll make myſelf as eaſy as I can.

The next morning Sir William ſet out, and was abſent from home four or five days. His return was ſooner than the lady expected: for on ſending a card to inform her of it, and of his intention to wait on her, ſhe ſent immediately for Mr. Coupler. When he came, ſhe had the modeſty to deſire him to wait on

Sir

Sir William and let him know ſhe would never live with him. We may conceive the aſtoniſhment of the honeſt doctor at this ſtrange requeſt. You amaze me, Madam, replied he: I hope you have done nothing to repent of. I would not carry ſuch a meſſage for the world! Send for him and deliver it yourſelf. With theſe words he left her.

Soon after he was gone the bridegroom came; and meeting her waiting-woman, inquired after her lady's health. To which ſhe anſwered, Sir, my miſtreſs is COMICAL! What do you mean? ſays he. Really, Sir, ſhe replied, I don't well know, but my lady is very COMICAL! She lay a-bed to-day, having

having had no reſt all night: when ſhe got up, I dreſſed her and ſhe would lie on the bed again, and there ſhe is. Sir William could get nothing more out of the Abigail, and therefore went up to the lady himſelf. He found her awake, but complaining of ill health; and, what was worſe, ſhe ſeemed to be in an ill humour. She took care however not to mention a word to him of what had paſt between her and Coupler; but, with ſeeming confuſion, ſaid, She would never go to Worthy-hall, while Mrs. Comfit the houſe-keeper was there, and one of the chamber-maids, ſhe being informed he had too great an intimacy with the latter. The baronet

ronet was alarmed at this unexpected accuſation, and expoſtulated with ſome warmth on her liſtening to ſuch ſtories, which he ſaid, were only raiſed by envious people to create an uneaſineſs between them.

His PROPER behaviour on this occaſion ſeemed to ſoften the lady's reſentment, who very ſoon began to ſmile and diſcover an inclination to a better ſubject. In ſhort, Sir William began to conſider, WHO he was, and WHERE he was; and might with great propriety have applied to himſelf the following ſtanza of a noble lord, who, I preſume, was in the ſame ſituation, and where YIELDING was neceſſary:

Bring

Bring with thee, goddeſs, Graces three,
With all the nymphs both frank and free,
Of every feature laviſh:
Melting and yielding let her be;
Conſider I am ſixty-three,
And that's no age to raviſh.

The lady after this pleaſant incident, which is generally productive of peace and good humour, appeared to have altered her mind; and for ſome days was agreeably employed in laying out ſchemes for her ſpeedy removal to Worthy-hall.

The 12th of October was now arrived, when Sir William paid her a morning viſit as uſual; it was then agreed between them, that he ſhould ſet out in a few days for London to buy new cloaths and liveries; and that during his abſence ſhe ſhould

take the opportunity of reconciling her brothers and aunts to the marriage.

With this pleaſing expectation he took his leave till the accuſtomed hour of return in the evening. Juſt as that hour approached he received a meſſage from one Mr. Hang-up, an attorney, that if he was alone and diſengaged, he would wait upon him on buſineſs. This meſſage was ſent from a neighbouring inn by which Sir William was to paſs as he returned to his lady; he accordingly ſoon followed the meſſenger, intending to call in his way.

When he was ſhewn into the parlour, Hang-up told him, he was afraid he had brought an unwelcome meſſage; for his buſineſs

wa

was to inform him that at 4 o'clock that ſame afternoon, he had carried the lady, called the widow Wiley, to her huſband John Rover, Eſq; and that ſhe had deſired him to wait on Sir William to inform him of it, that he might give himſelf no farther trouble about her.

When Sir William had collected himſelf, and was able to ſpeak properly, he ſaid, He had never had the leaſt intimation that Mr. Rover courted the widow, much leſs that ſhe was his wife; he therefore inſiſted on knowing when, where, and by whom they were married; and aſked, if he could not ſee the lady. Hang-up told him he was going back to the parties, and would return with Mr. Rover's anſwer

in the morning. The borough which that gentleman repreſented in parliament, and where he then reſided, was but a few ſhort miles from Worthy-hall; and this Hang-up was Mr. Rover's agent in the ſaid borough.

The next morning he came to inform Sir William from his principal, that the latter was married to the lady in queſtion on the 16th day of June laſt, in * * * * church by the Rev. Mr. Credule.

Sir William's firſt care was to inquire into the matter of fact: accordingly a meſſenger was ſoon diſpatched to the aforeſaid Reverend to ſearch the regiſter, and to have the licence and bond examined; from all which it appeared that

John

John Rover and his lady were married on the 16th day of June 1752.

And now, reader, I muſt take thee a little behind the curtain, and inform thee, that while our honeſt well-meaning baronet was perſuaded to take the journey above-mentioned, our heroine was trying to reclaim her loſt lover; and the fluctuations of her mind between hope and fear will account for the conſequent oddities of her conduct. At length her remonſtrances had the deſired effect, and on the 9th of October he ſent for her privately and married her in his chamber; after which ſhe returned home for three days, and at the expiration of that time was carried back publickly to her new huſband, as is before recited.

But how are we to account for the aforeſaid date of June 16th?—— In the following manner.——When Mr. Rover wedded the lady, he knew not that ſhe had been married ſixteen days before to Sir William: this was a ſecret ſhe took care not to impart to him; yet to ſave her honour, and knowing her condition, he prevailed with Mr. Credule to antedate the marriage, giving him a bond of a thouſand pounds to indemnify him from any harm that might happen.

Thus far he was drawn aſide by motives of humanity, and without any ſiniſter views; but, alas! one falſe ſtep leads to many, and he that once forſakes the path of rectitude, knows not when he ſhall be able

to

to return. When this gentleman was made acquainted with all the particulars of the lady's ſituation, he was drawn in to join with her in a ſcheme of cool deliberate miſchief, which he would before have abhorred.

They were now to guard againſt the conſequences of Sir William's reſentment, who was preparing to proſecute the lady for bigamy. While they ſtaid in the country *, they lived very private and retired, ſaw none but their moſt particular friends, and Mr. Hang-up the attorney was their privy-counſellor.

After

* When this couple made their firſt appearance at church there happened a pleaſant incident: the 2d leſſon for the day proved to be the

ivth

After ſome time ſpent in forming a plan for their future operations, they all privately ſet out for London; whence we ſhall ſoon hear from them in thunder.

Sir

---

ivth chapter of St. John; and was read by their own parſon, Mr. Credule; in which occurred the following paſſage:

"Jeſus ſaid unto her, Go call thy huſband "and come hither. The woman anſwered "and ſaid, I have no huſband: Jeſus ſaid unto "her, Thou haſt well ſaid I have no huſband; "for thou haſt had five huſbands, and he "whom thou haſt IS NOT THY HUSBAND; in "that ſaidſt thou truly."

The greateſt part of the congregation (who were not unacquainted with the lady's adventures) were in a high titter at the new-married couple, and the lady was very near fainting away.

Sir William's uſual time of going to the capital was more than advanced; but beſides the unexpected buſineſs, which the foregoing incidents had involved him in, he was attacked by a ſlight fit of the gout; which was of itſelf ſufficient to detain him in the country. Thus he remained too inactive for his ſituation, and indulging in too much ſecurity, when he was alarmed by the arrival of a ſpecial meſſenger from London, who brought him letters to the following effect; That on Monday the 5th day of February, two learned council had moved the court of K——'s B—— for an information to be granted againſt Sir William Worthy, Bart. John Coupler, Clerk, and Anne his wife,

and

and Lieut. Richard Worthy, for certain TRESPASSES, CONTEMPTS, CONSPIRACIES, and MISDEMEANORS, entered into with a view to force Anne the wife of John Rover, Eſq; againſt her will and conſent to marry him the ſaid Sir William.

To recite here the ſeveral affidavits would treſpaſs too much on the reader's patience: let it ſuffice that that of our Matron contained a moſt artful perverſion of every circumſtance in the foregoing narrative, to ſerve her preſent purpoſe. To ſhew her uncommon talents this way, we ſhall give a ſhort abſtract of her affidavit; and ſhall produce that paſſage at large which relates to the hyſteric fit mentioned above in page 141.

She

She begins with ſetting forth, "That early in the preceding ſummer Sir William had made overtures for her acquaintance, and at length had declared a violent paſſion for her, which ſhe had rejected with ſcorn: That Mr. and Mrs. Coupler had uſed all poſſible means to perſuade her to a compliance, but without effect: 'Till Wen'ſday the 26th of Auguſt; when being informed that Sir William had ſent for her ſervant, and taken the liberty to queſtion him about her character, ſhe thought herſelf obliged to go to Mr. Coupler's houſe to enquire the reaſon of it; he having been preſent."

Here ſhe puts ſeveral oaths into the poor parſon's mouth, and repreſents

preſents him, as telling her, that " it was a damned odd infamous affair:" but that, " upon his ſoul, Sir William loved her dearly, and had done this only to clear her character: he was certain, however, that it would make a great noiſe in the neighbourhood, and therefore would adviſe her to marry Sir William, as the only means to ſilence the ſame."

She deſcribes herſelf as rejecting this propoſal with the greateſt diſdain, and declaring that ſhe would not marry Sir William, tho' the whole world depended onit —" ſhe " being then married to John " Rover, Eſq; though her marriage " was kept ſecret for particular " reaſons."

Her

Her affidavit then proceeds to ſet forth, " That the ſaid John Cou-
" pler and his wife greatly preſſed
" her to ſtay and dine with them
" that day — and Mrs. Coupler
" told her, that if ſhe would
" ſtay, ſhe would ſend for her
" cloaths, that ſhe might dreſs
" herſelf there: — the Deponent
" being then in her morning
" dreſs. — That not in the leaſt
" ſuſpecting the deſign that was
" hatching againſt her, ſhe ac-
" cepted their offer. — That ſoon
" after dinner Deponent went up
" ſtairs to dreſs herſelf, her cloaths
" being come.—And while ſhe was
" dreſſing, Mrs. Coupler came into
" the room, and told her ſhe was
" afraid ſhe was cold, for there

" was

" was ſcarce any fire. Deponent
" anſwered, She was not over warm.
" Upon which Mrs. Coupler left
" the room, and came in again
" with a glaſs of liquor in her
" hand, which ſhe pretended was
" wine, preſſing her to drink it:—
" That overcome by her importu-
" nities, ſhe did drink the ſame,
" and immediately afterwards went
" down into the parlour.

" That in about fifteen minutes
" after drinking the ſaid liquor,
" ſhe (Deponent) was taken ſud-
" denly very ſick, with a great
" trembling all over her; of which
" ſhe complained to Mrs. Coupler,
" who made her no anſwer, but
" left the room.—

" That

" That the Deponent then ſaw
" Sir William enter the ſame; and
" immediately afterwards became
" totally inſenſible, ſo that ſhe re-
" members nothing more, and
" knows not how long ſhe re-
" mained in that condition:—But
" that when ſhe came to herſelf,
" ſhe ſaw Sir William, Mr. Cou-
" pler, and his wife ſtanding by
" her, the ſaid Coupler having
" a book in his hand: Who aſked
" Deponent, How ſhe could fall
" into ſuch a fit, when it was her
" own deſire, as well as Sir Wil-
" liam's, to be married?—At which
" being greatly alarmed and aſto-
" niſhed, ſhe aſked him what he
" meant? He anſwered, What
" ſhould I mean, but that you were

" married

" married to Sir William this af-
" ternoon juſt before you were taken
" ſo ill?—To which ſhe replied, I
" believe you are mad, or you
" would not talk ſo.—And Sir
" William then ſaid, He won-
" dered Deponent could forget ſhe
" was married.——Upon which
" ſhe ſaid, I never was married to
" Sir William, nor ever will.——
——" The ſaid Coupler then told
" her, that to make ſuch a noiſe
" was to no purpoſe, for Sir William
" was determined to take Deponent
" to his houſe that night, unleſs ſhe
" would ſign a paper he had in his
" hand, which he ſaid conſiſted
" only of her promiſing never to
" relate what had paſſed; Sir Wil-
" liam ſwearing at the ſame time by

" all

" all that was ſacred, if ſhe did not
" ſign the paper, he would imme-
" diately take her to his own
" houſe: So that what with the
" fright they had put her in, and
" the illneſs which the liquor oc-
" caſioned, and ſeeing no other
" way to eſcape from them, ſhe
" was obliged and did ſign the
" ſaid paper *, without reading or
" hearing the ſame read over, or

---

* Here the reader is to note, that the deed by which Mrs. Wiley made a releaſe of dower, had been originally dated Auguſt 22d, on which day it was to have been executed; but when it came to be uſed, Sir William eraſed the name of the month, and inſerted the word September in its ſtead. A circumſtance of which ſhe was reſolved to make a proper advantage.

" knowing what were the contents " thereof."

The affidavit then proceeds to ſet forth " how ill ſhe was after ſhe got home; and how Sir William, and his agents, Mr. and Mrs. Coupler, repeatedly endeavoured to prevail on her to acknowledge the marriage; till finding they gained no ground, and ſhe ſtill perſiſted in her refuſal, they ſeemed to relent and give up their pretenſions: " That under promiſe of delivering up the paper which ſhe had ignorantly ſigned, they had once more inveigled her to the parſonage, which was on the famous 23d of September: that by the interruption of company ſhe had been prevented from going away till evening, when Sir William offered to carry her

home in his coach: an offer which ſhe accepted, believing he had given up his infamous deſigns. "That the next morning it being reported ſhe had been married the preceding evening, ſhe ſent ſeveral perſons to know the truth of the report; to whom Sir William and Mr. Coupler had denied the truth of it. But that afterwards they aſſerted ſhe was ſo married, and gave her continual diſturbance on that account, till ſhe found herſelf obliged to ſend her own woman to inform her huſband John Rover of the ſame; upon which he immediately ſent for her home to him, and received her publickly as his wife."

This affidavit of our matron was confirmed by thoſe of Mr. Rover,

of

of her man and maid, and of many other perſons; ſome of which were true; others of them ſuborned and falſe.

Here is a ſcene of glorious miſchief! Ruin is ſtrongly marked in every line! What can the parties accuſed bring in their defence againſt this horrible attack! Why nothing—but TRUTH, ſupported by their own fair characters! And indeed in the worſt of dangers there needs no other helmet.

In the following term the defendants gave in affidavits on their part, ſupported by ſuch concurrent evidence, that after a hearing of three days, the judges were unanimous in their opinion, that the whole deſign of the lady's affidavit and of the

reſt

reſt on that ſide, was to deceive the court: that thoſe falſehoods had been oppoſed by facts that could not lie: that the marriage of Sir William had been fully proved; and that there was no doubt of its having been ſolemnized by her free conſent; by which the whole complaint fell to the ground; and ought * not only to be diſcharged, but diſcharged with COSTS.

Upon this defeat, all thoſe who were any ways aiding and abetting in that iniquitous deſign began to tremble; and the foremoſt in that liſt was the Rev. Mr. Credule, who very ſoon began to experience that

* In the lawyers phraſe it is, "The rule of court, ought not only to be diſcharged, but" &c.

remorſe which every good mind muſt feel for having been ſeduced to commit a bad action.

A report of this ſoon came to his dioceſan, a very worthy prelate, who called to ſee him. At the ſight of his lordſhip he fell on his knees to implore forgiveneſs of his crime; declared from what motives he had been drawn in to commit it; proteſted that as oft as he had recommended to Mr. Rover to accommodate matters, he had been rebuked by him and his attorney; that the latter had prevented him from declaring the truth before; and had even offered him money to go aſide, when he ſhould be called upon to give his evidence; and that he ſhould long ſince have diſcovered the true time of the

marriage, but for this honeſt and virtuous lawyer.

As ſoon as the now truly Reverend Mr. Credule had made this diſcovery, a meſſenger was diſpatched to Mr. Rover, who was then in the neighbourhood, to give him account of it. This ſo alarmed him that he immediately fled his country and became an exile in France, where we ſhall leave him ſurrounded with all the horrors of a guilty mind.

When the lady received the ſame information, ſhe privately ſent for her children and abſconded, leaving her name to diſgrace and infamy. Sir William immediately commenced a proſecution in the ſpiritual court for a divorce *à mensâ et thoro*.

As for poor Credule, who before this accident bore the character of a worthy man, and afterwards made all the atonement in his power, it is with concern we mention, that he never more ſtirred out of his chamber, but ſoon after died of a broken heart. Such are the ſevere reflections of a delicate mind, when filled with ſhame, and wounded with the ſtings of ſelf-conviction!

With regard to honeſt Mr. Hang-up the attorney, the chief adviſer and promoter of this villainou proſecution, we are ſorry to inform the reader, that he has not yet been rewarded with what he ſo richly deſerved, A HALTER.

THE

THE
TURKISH MATRON.
A FRAGMENT.

O

THE TURKISH MATRON.

A FRAGMENT; from a MS. copy.

Prefixed to the MS. is the following EPISTLE.

FRIEND,

IF thou art not one of thoſe, who think none but odd fellows pore over oriental manuſcripts, and that the matter contain'd in the ſaid manuſcripts is to the full

as odd as thoſe who ſtudy it, thou wilt not perhaps be diſpleaſed with the following fragment, which was tranſmitted to me from France, as a great curioſity, by a member of the academy royal.

Thou muſt however accept the tranſlation on the ſame terms that I did the original, which is in Arabic; that is to ſay, without a key to the characters or facts it treats of; hiſtory not affording us the leaſt aſſiſtance to gueſs at either. It begins abruptly after the following manner.

The

The HISTORY.

* * * * THE principal point the vizier had in view was to perpetuate his power. * * * *

There was yet about the ſultan one man of the race of Ali Ebn Azra, who hated the vizier as much as he loved his ſovereign, who ſeemed to be left as an example to the great of all the virtues they ought to imitate. Fond of fame, but more of virtue; loyal, but not for reward; free in the delivery of truth, but gentle in the manner of

doing it; modeſt in defending himſelf, but reſolute in the defence of others; not void of human frailties, but not too proud to acknowledge them; incapable of flattery, though it were to oblige the woman he loved, or to temporize with the prince he revered; of ſuch exemplary honour, that no conſideration, though of life itſelf, was of any weight in the ſcale againſt it: in a word, he ſo ſteadily oppoſed all thoſe meaſures he could not approve, that, till he was removed, the vizier never thought himſelf ſafe.

Nor was this apprehenſion of his without foundation; for when he had left the ſultan ſelf-ſatisfied as a god, believing all his affairs to be

in

in the moſt flouriſhing ſtate; his government eſtabliſhed, his people happy, his enemies ſubmiſſive, and his glory at the full height; the plain-dealing Achmet from time to time broke the bubble with a ſingle blaſt, and manifeſted to him, that when the waters are covered with the moſt froth, they are ever the moſt troubled.

To rid the court of this dangerous nuiſance was now become the vizier's favourite point; and in order thereto many a pathetic remonſtrance, many a warm complaint, and many a ſpecious pretence did he urge to the ſultan: but ſo clear was Achmet's innocence, ſo acknowledged his virtue, that all his artifices recoiled upon himſelf; and he

half trembled for fear what he projected for the ruin of his enemy, ſhould haſten his own.

It happened, at length, that certain of the ſultan's allies, taking advantage of the flaws in his vizier's adminiſtration, invaded his frontiers, plundered his towns, and led his ſubjects into captivity: provoked with which indignities, all the nations under his command, as with one voice, importuned the prince for vengeance, and to be led forth in arms againſt the enemy. But ſo unwilling was the vizier to part with any of the public treaſure for theſe noble purpoſes; ſo conſcious of his inability to conduct a war, and ſo fearful that new demands on the people would occa-

ſion an inquiry into the application of the vaſt ſums already received; that he ſtaved off the rupture for ſeveral years; vainly ſoliciting the mercy of the enemy on one hand, and artfully promiſing his fellow-ſubjects redreſs on the other.

But notwithſtanding his fair promiſes, no ſymptom of any ſuch thing appearing, and the tempers of the people, by a long ſeries of injuries, being worked up to a dangerous ferment; Achmet, as uſual, took advantage of the criſis to lay the whole truth before the ſultan: who, aſtoniſhed to find that his ſubjects had ſo deeply ſuffered, that his own honour had ſo long been at ſtake, and that ſo little dependance was to be placed on the trifling negotiations

gotiations of his vizier, not only reſolved that very inſtant to declare war, but offered to nominate to the chief command whatever general his faithful Achmet thought proper to recommend.

Achmet did not fail to improve the opportunity; and having pauſed a few minutes, Lord of my life, ſaid he, there is a ſoldier long ſince laid aſide by the vizier for ſpeaking as a ſoldier ſhould, TRUTH; and denied the preferment due to his valour and virtue; I mean Oſmyn the aga: there never yet was any danger which he durſt not face; nor fraud that he would not detect; nor vice that he would not oppoſe. His ſword is his advocate; his ſervices bear witneſs of his worth;

and

and the records of our ſcribes will be his memorial. He, were I worthy to adviſe, ſhould go forth as thy ſhadow to chaſtiſe licentiouſneſs, reſtore diſcipline, awaken valour, atchieve glory, and reward deſert. Thy ſlaves will find him now in the field toiling with his own victorious hands, thoughtleſs of ambition, but diſpoſed to receive thy ſublime beheſts with a veneration next to that he offers up to heaven.

Be it ſo, replied the ſultan; he is my elect: let him know I commit both my glory and my vengeance to his charge: but lay thy hand on thy mouth, Achmet; this reſolution I challenge as my own, nor will I permit my vizier to oppoſe

poſe it; as therefore thou regardeſt thy own honour, or my friendſhip, keep the ſecret inviolably. This Achmet did not fail to promiſe with the utmoſt earneſtneſs; and withdrew; tranſported with his commiſſion, not ſo much becauſe it was a proof of his credit and power with his lord, as that the brave Oſmyn would at laſt find himſelf in a capacity to employ his great abilities to avenge the inſults ſo long offered to his country.

It was the policy of the vizier to ſurround his maſter with his ſpies, in which he was ſo ſucceſsful, that the ſultan had no retirement ſo ſecret, but his intelligence found him out; nor was any corner of his ſeraglio ſo ſacred, but his emiſſaries had

had means to make themſelves acquainted with all that was tranſacted there. He had even bribed the reigning ſultana into his intereſt, and furniſhed her with inſtructions, which ſhe was often to practiſe in the very moment when love and fondneſs rendered her influence moſt irreſiſtible.

It is no wonder therefore, that he was inſtantly informed of this cabinet conference between the ſultan and Achmet, and of the apparent ſatisfaction which was viſible in the eyes of the laſt when he took his leave. But though he received intimation of the conference, he remained in total ignorance as to the ſubject matter on which it turned: not a whiſper had been heard, nor a ſyllable had been dropped, nor a hint

hint had eſcaped; all was dark and impenetrable as midnight. The vizier felt all the tortures of the rack till he had diſcovered the ſecret, in which he met with almoſt inſurmountable difficulties, ſince the ſultana herſelf was not only left in the dark, but when ſhe tried her uſual arts, flatteries, endearments, reſentments, ſullenneſſes, tears, faintings, to worm out the truth, had the mortification to meet with nothing but downright refuſals, attended with frowns and rebukes.

A prince is to his own court what the ſun is to the firmament; if he ſhines, every object is gilded; if clouded, all is gloomy. The reſentment of the ſultan, the vexation of his fair favourite, and the apprehenſions

ſions of the vizier, had given an air of diſtraction to almoſt every face; nor could the dulleſt obſerver be long at a loſs to gueſs the cauſe.

There was then at court a young man named Ibrahim, who had endeared himſelf to the vizier by manifeſting a genius for intrigue ſcarce inferior to his own; and who had beſides made it appear, that he was intirely at his devotion. To him did the vizier pour forth his diſcontent, rather to unboſom, than with any hope of having it removed; and was therefore aſtoniſhed to hear him on the contrary undertake, without the leaſt heſitation, to ſurmount all obſtacles, and procure him a ſpeedy relief, at the peril of his head.

My lord, ſaid he, I am but juſt returned from viſiting Fatima, the illuſtrious widow of Kara Ebn Iſhmael; ſhe loves Achmet, and is tenderly beloved by him. As chance made him acquainted with her beauties in the life of her late lord, ſhe has permitted him to ſee her unveiled ever ſince his death: beſides, their nuptials being near at hand, ſhe makes no ſecret of her paſſion for him; and as Achmet, ſince this ſecret conference with the ſultan, has ſent letters and excuſes, when he was expected in perſon, ſhe has expreſſed her chagrin for the diſappointment openly. An incident of this nature happened while I was preſent, and I could eaſily perceive, that her reſentment was not without

ſome

ſome mixture of the wormwood of jealouſy: from which ſlight hint, my lord, expect to have all your wiſhes anſwered.

Ibrahim then took his leave of the vizier and returned to Fatima, whom he found diſpatching a billet to Achmet to inſiſt on his immediate preſence, in order to clear up his late unprecedented behaviour. Fair lady, ſaid he entering, if your thoughts are upon your abſent lover, or you are diſpoſed to command his attendance, your meſſenger muſt be diſpatched to the houſe of Oſmyn the aga: the hours he ſhould enjoy with you, he waſtes there. I ſaw him this moment ſlip in at the poſtern, as one who cared not to be diſcovered: and though it is probable

his viſits are innocent, it is poſſible they may be otherwiſe. If the family of Oſmyn are above ſolicitation, or if the remembrance of your ſuperior attractions ſecures him from any laſting infidelity, it is poſſible he may for a moment forget himſelf in the arms of ſome bewitching ſlave, whom he may intend to part with as cheaply as he won. I ſay, it is poſſible that even Achmet for a moment may be thus ſeduced; and it is neceſſary you ſhould be delivered from the ſuſpicion. Oblige him then to lay open the ſecret of theſe myſterious viſits to the bottom: it is a ſatisfaction you may demand of him, and which he cannot refuſe.

Fatima lent a greedy ear to this advice; it favoured the paſſion that

was

was then uppermoſt in her heart, and which ſhe was reſolved at all hazards to indulge. Glad therefore that ſhe received ſome intelligence on which to ground her ſuſpicions, ſhe waited with ungovernable impatience for the arrival of Achmet, which happened almoſt the moment Ibrahim took his leave; and they were no ſooner alone, but ſhe opened her whole heart, and that in the imperious ſtile of provoked beauty, conſcious it may command, and reſolute to be obeyed.

Achmet was thunderſtruck with this unexpected trial; but nevertheleſs defended himſelf like a man of ſenſe, ſpirit, and honour: firſt by witty evaſions, raillery, and humour; then by general aſſertions of his inno-

cence, and the moſt ardent expreſſions of unfeigned affection and unalterable fidelity. But all this proving but oil to the fire, and Fatima ſtill inſiſting peremptorily on being ſatisfied to the minuteſt point, he then urged, that what ſhe was ſo curious to know, was a ſtate ſecret communicated under the ſeal of the cabinet; remonſtrated the ſultan's particular command, and that his own honour was pledged for his obedience and integrity.

And what, ſays ſhe, my Lord? do I deſerve to be made your wife, and not to be truſted with what every court-ſpy will be maſter of to-morrow, as well as you?——No, no; this is a poor thin pretence to evade the truth and put a ſtop to my inquiries.

quiries. But I am not ſo eaſily deceived: and either reſolve to comply, or to ſee me no more. At theſe words ſhe roſe haſtily from her ſofa, and made towards the door with ſuch an air, as left no room to doubt ſhe was in earneſt.

This was a ſight the infatuated Achmet could not bear: he followed her with precipitation, hung upon her robe, and having in a manner forced her back to the ſofa, gazed upon her for ſome minutes in profound ſilence; during which time his heart was torn with agonies inexpreſſible.

At laſt love gained the aſcendancy, and Fatima's triumph was complete. Achmet poured the fatal ſecret into the boſom of his beloved; made a merit

merit of the confidence he had placed in her; and only conjured her not to forget, that he had intruſted her both with his life and honour. Fatima on the other hand was ſo overjoyed with her conqueſt, that ſhe taſted almoſt as much pleaſure from her pride as her love; and became ſo liberal of her acknowledgments, that Achmet had ſcarce power to perceive his own weakneſs, or regret his infidelity.

In this temper on each ſide they parted, and the next morning Ibrahim, who was impatient to know the ſucceſs of his artifice, paid another viſit to Fatima; who received him with that peculiar air of ſatisfaction, which breaks out involuntarily when the boſom ſwells with pleaſing paſſions, which it pants to communicate.

Ibrahim

Ibrahim inſtantly perceived it, and did not fail to bleed her in the right vein. It was not enough that ſhe had carried her point, and ſubdued the virtue of ſo conſiderable a man as Achmet; the glory of it was ſtill behind, and Ibrahim, ſhe perſuaded herſelf, for his paſt information had a ſort of right to participate in the ſucceſs: he needed then only to open the channel and the ſtream flowed. The dreaded, coveted, miſchievous ſecret could now be detained no longer, and it was hard to determine whether the hearer or relator enjoyed it moſt.

Ibrahim having now carried his darling point; made his viſit as ſhort as poſſible, and poſted to the vizier, who gave him inſtant audience, and

greedily devoured his news. Ibrahim (ſaid he, his eyes ſparkling with joy) thou haſt made me happy; I ſhall now triumph over this fellow and his virtue: the empire will henceforth be wholly at my mercy, and thou ſhalt command thy own reward.

He then made the beſt of his way to the ſeraglio, and being admitted to the ſultan; May the days of my Lord, ſaid he, endure as long as the ſun, and may his glory be eternal! Here are the ſeals of thy ſublime authority, with the cuſtody of which thou haſt ſo long honoured thy ſlave: permit me now to reſign them at thy footſtool, and let the ſhort reſidue of a life worn out in thy ſervice, be ſpent in prayers for thy perpetual felicity.

licity. Thou haſt thought proper to withdraw thy confidence from me, withdraw alſo thy power: Achmet has thy heart, let him alſo wield thy ſceptre. But let me beſeech thy ſublime highneſs not to truſt him too far; the ſecrets of thy empire are too mighty for him; even the intentions of thy goodneſs in favour of Oſmyn the aga have already eſcaped him; they are become the talk of the ſoldiery, and the very merchants canvaſs the conſequences over their *kopha*. I ſpeak this from a heart full of zeal for thy ſervice; not in envy of Achmet's deſtined greatneſs.

All this while the ſultan diſcovered the higheſt aſtoniſhment, mixt with concern and indignation; and when the vizier had ended, remained for a

while

while in a profound ſilence; after which, like one who from a ſtate of perplexity had brought his reflections to an iſſue; Withdraw, ſaid he to the vizier; before the ſun ſets, thou ſhalt know my pleaſure. The vizier with a profound reverence obeyed, and the ſultan immediately diſpatched one of his pages to order Achmet to come into his preſence that moment.

Achmet was then at the feet of his charming widow, diſſolved in raptures for her having in acknowledgment of his late ſacrifice conſented that the morrow ſhould be their wedding-day: but, on receiving the ſultan's command, took as he thought a ſhort farewel, and haſtened to obey it. Being come to the ſevaglio he found

the

the ſultan alone; who thus ſignified his pleaſure.

The vizier is thy enemy, Achmet; I therefore am not prone to give him credit, when he brings complaints againſt thee; nor could prevail on myſelf to condemn thee without a hearing. I aſked thy advice preferably to his, and followed it; but enjoined thee not to let the ſecret eſcape thee. He ſays thou haſt, and adds ſuch particulars, as would ſtagger any man leſs attached to thee than I. Is it true? I will be determind by thy own voice, for I am confident thou canſt not lye.

Achmet, covered with conuſion, ſtood ſilent.—My friend, continued the ſultan, do not give me the pain of doubting a moment.—O Fatima! cried

cried out the unfortunate Achmet, and fainted away; but ſoon recovering himſelf, and being out of countenance at his want of firmneſs, when he needed it ſo much, recollected all that was brave about him, and then went on.

Lord of my life, I will not pretend to extenuate what can neither be concealed nor excuſed: I have truſted a woman with my honour, who, it appears, had none of her own. The ſecret is out, and I am undone.—Another pauſe of ſilence enſued.—The ſultan looked to be the image of ſorrow, and Achmet of deſpair.

At laſt the ſultan cloſed the ſcene with theſe words: Achmet, I am not only ſorry for thee, but thy whole kind.

kind. Since thou haſt deceived me, I have loſt all confidence in man: the Aga Oſmyn I will however employ on thy recommendation; ſince I am well perſuaded his virtues deſerve it; nor will I ever ſhock him with the remembrance of thy indiſcretion. Adieu, Achmet, we have each of us loſt a friend, which neither of us ever can regain!

At theſe words the monarch roſe, and Achmet having kiſſed the hem of his robe, left his preſence in a ſituation of mind to be imagined, perhaps not to be deſcribed: when he was got home he threw himſelf on the firſt ſofa he met with, ſtunned with the misfortune that had befallen him, and for the preſent incapable of reflection. His ſervants ſpread the table, and

he

he ſat down to it as uſual, but with the mien of one who ſlept with his eyes open; in the poſſeſſion, but without the uſe, of his ſenſes.

In this dreadful manner he paſſed the reſt of the day, and when night came on, it brought with it neither comfort nor repoſe. With the dawn his intellectual faculties returned. The promiſe he had ſo long ſolicited, and which he had received with ſuch raptures from Fatima, ruſhed into his mind, and rouſing him from his trance, at once diſplayed before his view a ſcene of wretchedneſs, that ſeemed to have neither bound nor end. What was before his paradiſe, was now become his hell: both Fatima and himſelf he conſidered as fallen angels, whom grace could not

reach,

reach, whom penitence could not ſave. He had forfeited his honour, ſhe had betrayed her love: to think of her was horror; to be wedded to her was madneſs. In his own heart no reſource of comfort was left. It was an empty uſeleſs caſket, from whence the twin jewels, honour and content, were ſtolen.

Such was the deplorable ſituation of the unfortunate Achmet: while Fatima, on the other hand, had ſlept like the favourite of providence in the very arms of tranquillity, and ſaluted the morning, when ſhe roſe, as the harbinger of happineſs. Love and Achmet took up all her thoughts; ſhe dreſſed, ſhe laughed, ſhe ſummoned her friends to ſhare in her good fortune: ſhe thought

the

the moments, inſtead of being winged, had leaden feet, and wantonly chid them to make more haſte away.

The appointed hour at laſt arrived: the circle was formed all bright, all beautiful. The bride in the midſt diſtinguiſhed like the morning ſtar by ſuperior luſtre. Nothing was now wanting but Achmet; and every haſty footſtep ſeemed to promiſe his arrival. But behold, in his ſtead, when expectation was almoſt ſick with longing, a meſſenger enters, and who having preſented a billet to Fatima, vaniſhed in ſuch haſte, as ſeemed to indicate an anſwer was no part of his commiſſion.

At this unexpected incident the bride's countenance fell at once: her breaſt

breaſt heaved: her colour went and came: her hand trembled: a cold ſweat ſtood upon her brow: and having with her eye run haſtily over the fatal letter, ſhe gave a loud ſhriek and fainted away. The gaiety of the nuptial ſcene was now wholly loſt in a general confuſion: part of the bride's fair friends received her in their arms, and uſed their beſt endeavours to recall her wandering ſpirits; while the reſt, with irreſiſtible curioſity, examined the lines which had power to effect ſo ſudden and ſo ſad a change.

ACHMET to FATIMA.

"O FATIMA! Thou haſt ruined the man who adored thee: I truſted thee with my honour, and thou haſt betrayed it to my enemy. Of trea-

chery however I do not accuſe thee; but if frailty implies guilt, thou haſt even more to anſwer for than I: for hadſt not thou tempted, I had not fallen.—Thee I forgive: myſelf I never can; and for fear I ſhould, am reſolved to look on the eyes of my undoer no more.—Adieu, Fatima! before this is preſented to thee, I ſhall be numbered with thoſe that have been."

The moment this was read, the houſe rung with lamentations, and meſſengers were diſpatched at full ſpeed to prevent, if poſſible, ſuch a miſerable cataſtrophe: impoſſible indeed it proved: dead they found him on a ſofa, with a ſmile on his countenance, as if to ſignify that his tranſgreſſion was now atoned for * * * * *

THE

THE

ROMAN MATRON.

From an ancient STORY-BOOK.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE ROMAN MATRON.

From the old ſtory-book, intitled, The ſeven wiſe Maiſters of Rome *.

Courtly Reader,

DO not too faſtidiouſly reject the following tale, though it appears in the rough and homely garb of antiquity. The outlines of the picture are evidently taken from Petronius, though

* From an ancient copy in black letter.

the finiſhing is done by a much coarſer and leſs ſkilful hand. If our old-faſhioned author has not been able to preſerve thoſe delicate ſtrokes of wit and humour which fell from the gay and elegant Petronius, at leaſt he has made ſome rude efforts to compenſate for this defect; he has thrown in ſeveral additional incidents, with a view to heighten the cataſtrophe, and render the frailty of the Matron more ſtriking and inexcuſable.

After the reader had ſeen the Epheſian Matron ſo gracefully move in her Grecian robe, as dreſſed out by the courtly Petronius, we thought it would be a matter of curioſity, and perhaps of entertainment, to ſhew him the ſame character

character tricked out in the old Engliſh ruff and farthingale by the Gothic hand of one of our rude unpoliſhed anceſtors.

It is diverting to obſerve how naturally the author has fallen in with the melancholy turn of his countrymen, and humoured their propenſity for diſmal ſtories, by reducing one of the moſt gay and pleaſant tales of antiquity to a downright bloody and tragical narrative.

The

The History.

THERE was a knighte that had a faire yonge wife, whom hee loved entirelye, ſoe that he could not bee out of her ſighte. It happened on a time that they played together at cheſſe, and the knighte by chaunce had a knife in his hande, and ſhee fortuned to ſmite her hande on the knife, ſoe that a littel bloud beganne to appeare. When the knighte ſawe his wife bleede, hee fell to the grounde in a ſwounde. His wife, ſeeinge

ſeeinge that, caſt colde water on his face, inſomuche that he came a littel to himſelfe, and ſayd lightlye; Call the curate with the holye ſacrament, for I muſt dye; for the bloud that I have ſeene come from your finger hath ſmitten deathe to my harte. Then the prieſt came, and comforted him much, and adminiſtred the ſacrament unto him: and anon he dyed; for whoſe deathe there was grete ſorrowe, eſpeciallye by his wife.

Alſo after the obſequies were finiſhed, ſhee went and laye upon the grave, and there made grete lamentacion, and ſayd, Shee would never departe thence; but as a turtle dove, ſhe would for the love of her huſbonde there abide and dye.

dye. Then went her friends and neighboures unto her and ſayd, What availeth this for his ſoule, to live here weepinge until you dye? It is better that you goe home and there give almes for the love of God, and that ſhal more availe your huſbonde's ſoul, then in this place to abide.

To whom ſhee aunſwered, I praye holde your peace: you are evil counſellours. Conſider yee not, how I am from him ſeparated by deathe for a littel bloud hee ſawe come out of my finger, therefore I ſhal never from hence departe. Her friends hearing that, made her a littel houſe nighe unto the grave; and putting therein all thinges neceſſarye, went away, thinking within

within a while ſhee ſhould be wearye to bee alone and ſo deſolate from all companye, and therebye deſire againe the companye of the people.

In the cittye was then a lawe, that if an offender againſt the lawe were hanged, the ſheriffe all night ſhould watche the dead bodye armed; and if it happened that the bodye hanged were ſtolne, the ſheriffe ſhould loſe all his landes and his life at the kinge's pleaſure. It happened ſoone after the knighte was dead, that a man ſhould be hanged for treſpaſſinge, ſo that the ſheriffe all that nighte watched by the gallowes not farre from the cittye; and the churche-yard was not farre from the ſame.

Then

Then beganne the ſheriffe to bee ſoe colde, that hee could not poſſiblye endure it, but was even readye to dye except hee mighte ſpeedilye warme him, it was ſo extreme colde and ſoe grete a froſt. And by chaunce eſpyinge a fire in the churche-yard, hee haſted and came thereto, and when hee was come near to it, hee knocked at the littel houſe. The woman ſayd; Who at this time knocketh at the houſe of the ſorrowfulle woman? Hee aunſwered; I am the ſheriffe, that hath endured much colde and am readye to freeze to deathe, unleſs without delaye you lette me warme myſelfe. Shee ſayd unto him, I feare that if I lette you in, yee ſhould cauſe mee to bee more heavye. Hee ſayd,

ſayd, I promiſe you that I ſhall ſaye noe words to your diſpleaſure.

Then ſhee lette him in, and when hee had ſitten a while by the fire, and was well warmed, hee ſayd unto her; O faire woman, with your licence would I faine ſpeake but one worde with you. Shee aunſwered, Sir, ſaye what pleaſeth you. Then hee ſayd, O ladye, you bee a faire gentlewoman rich and yonge; were it not more convenient for you to dwelle at home and to give almes, then to waſte yourſelfe here with weepinge. Shee ſayd, Sir knighte, had I knowen this before, you had not come in; for I ſaye to you, as I have ſayd to others oftentimes, you knowe my huſbonde loved mee ſoe welle, that for a littel bloud hee

ſawe

ſawe mee bleede out of my finger, hee is dead; wherefore I will dye for the love of him.

When as the knighte hearde this, hee tooke leave and went againe unto the gallowes, and when hee was come thither, and ſawe that the thiefe whom hee leſte there hanginge was ſtolne awaye, hee beganne to waxe heavye; and ſayd, Woe is mee! what ſhall I doe! for I have loſte my life and all my goodes. And goinge up and downe thus full of ſorrowe, hee knewe not what waye to turne himſelfe. At laſt hee concluded to goe to the deſſolate ladye and ſhowe her the heavineſs of his harte, to wit * if ſhe could give him any good counſayle.

* i. e. know.

When

When hee was come thither, hee called, and ſhee aſked him the cauſe. And hee ſayd, Madam, I am the ſheriffe that was righte nowe with you, and I would faine ſhewe you the ſecrettes of my harte, therefore I praye you open the dore. And hee went in, and ſayd unto her; O moſt vertuous ladye, I am nowe come to have your advice, for you know the lawes of the lande are, that when any man is hanged, and ſtolne off the gallowes, the ſheriffe's life and goodes are in the kinge's hands: nowe it happened while I was here and warmed mee, the thiefe's bodye was ſtolne, therefore I praye, faire ladye, for the love of God give mee your beſt advice what to doe. Shee aunſwered, I have compaſſion upon

you, for by the lawe you have loſt your life and goodes to the king: doe nowe after my counſayle and yee ſhall looſe neither. He aunſwered, I am to you gretelye bounden, hoping to have good comforte. Shee ſayd, Will you then promiſe to make mee your wife? The knighte aunſwered, Would God you were indeed ſo minded! but I feare you diſdain to humble yourſelf unto ſoe pore a knighte. Shee ſayd, I give you my wille thereto. And hee gave her againe his wille, and conſented to bee her knighte during his life.

Then ſayd ſhee, Yee knowe ſuch a daye my lord was buried, which for the love of mee dyed; take him out of the ſepulcher and hange him up inſtede of the thiefe.

The

The knighte aunſwered; Ladye, your counſayle is very good. Then went they and opened the ſepulcher and drewe him out. The knighte ſayd unto the ladye, Howe ſhall wee nowe doe, becauſe ere the thiefe was hanged, two of his teethe were ſmitten out, and I fear mee if that were perceived I ſhall dye the deathe. Then the ladye ſayd, Take a ſtone and ſtrike out two of his teethe. The knighte aunſwered, Madam, that maye not I doe, for while hee lived hee was my truſtye friende, and it ſhould bee to mee grete rebuke to doe ſoe diſloyall a deede to his bodye being dead. Shee aunſwered, For your love I ſhall doe it; and preſentlye tooke a ſtone and ſmote out two of his teethe.

Then ſhee ſayd to the ſheriffe, Take him and hange him upon the gallowes like the thiefe. The knighte ſayd, I feare to do it, for the thiefe in takinge was wounded upon his head, and he lacked his eares. Then the ladye ſayd, Take a ſworde and ſmite off his eares. The knighte aunſwered, O, madam, God forbid that I doe ſoe to the dead bodye of him whom I loved ſoe well in his life! Then ſayd ſhee, Give mee your ſworde and I ſhall for your love doe it: And ſoe tooke the ſworde and ſmote a manlye ſtroke on the dead man's foreheade, and cutte off his eares.

And when ſhee had thus done, ſhee ſayd, Nowe hange him. Then the knighte aunſwered, Yett I feare

to

to hange him, for the thiefe wanted both his *thumbes* *, and if hee bee ſearched and not found without, all my labor is loſte. Then ſayd ſhee, I never ſaw man ſoe fearfulle, ſeeinge the matter is ſure: Take a knife and cut away his *thumbes*. And hee aunſwered; That I maye not doe in any wiſe, and therefore I praye you ſpare me, for you knowe what a man is without his *thumbes*. Shee ſaid, For the love of you I ſhall doe it. Then ſhee tooke the knife

* Gentle Reader, in the ancient copy from whence this old ſtory is printed, the word that ſhould have come in above, was unfortunately every where eraſed. Whether we have recovered the true reading is left to the ſagacity of *Meſſieurs* the Critics, who are at liberty to ſubſtitute any other word they think more proper.

knife and cutte awaye her huſbonde's *thumbes*; and ſayd, Nowe take the churle thus disfigured and hange him up withouten dreade. And they went bothe and hunge the bodye upon the gallowes, and ſoe was the ſheriffe delivered.

Then ſaid the ladye, Now yee bee delivered from all dangers by my counſayle; therefore I deſire you according to your promiſe that yee wedde mee. The knighte ſayd, I have made a vowe, that I ſhall never wedde other ſo long as I live; the whiche I ſhall performe. Then hee ſayd, O thou moſte ſhamefulle and worſte of all women! who would take thee to wiſe? An honourable and lovinge knighte was thy huſbonde, who

for

for a littel bloud, that he ſawe iſſue out of thy finger, dyed. Now haſt thou ſmitten out two of his teethe; cutte off his eares and *thumbes*; and made a grete wound in his head; what devil would marry thee? therefore thou ſhalt never ſhame good man more: I will rid thee of thy life. And ſo hee drewe his ſworde, and with one ſtroke ſmote off her heade.

O TRAGICAL!

FINIS.

Tu hiſtoriam aut fabulam, quod refert PETRONIUS, pro libitu appellabis. Ita tamen ex facto accidiſſe EPHESI, & FLAVIANUS auctor eſt. Mulieremque tradit impietatis ſuæ, & ſceleris parricidalis & adulterii pœnas luiſſe.

JO. SARISBURIENSIS.

5 AP 58

6

Historia Jasonis Scipionis
Roma, 4to. 1490. A. 5. 21.
Publ. Libr. Cant.

Preserve
Cover

d/c